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**A Collection of Etudes Targeting Altissimo Passages in  
Alto Saxophone Solo Literature**

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**A Collection of Etudes Targeting Altissimo Passages in  
Alto Saxophone Solo Literature**

**by**

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**Treatise**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Musical Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2008**

## **Dedication**

To my wife Cheryl and my parents, Mark and Hillary.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Harvey Pittel and Andrew Dell’Antonio for their continued support and guidance, as well as to the rest of my committee for their time and attention. Thank you to Timothy O’Dell and Paul Cohen for directing me to copies of their work. Many thanks to generous publishers including Alphonse Leduc et Cie; Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI); Carl Fischer, Inc.; C.F. Peters Corporation; Dorn Publications, Inc.; Edward B. Marks Music Company and Bolcom Music; European American Music Distributors LLC; Gehrmans Musikförlag AB; Henmar Press, Inc.; Kyle Kindred; Lei Liang Publishing (ASCAP); Morsax Music; The Newmatic Press; the North American Saxophone Alliance; Oxford University Press, Inc.; Peer Musikverlag GmbH Hamburg; Southern Music Publishing Company, Inc.; Templeton Publishing, a division of Shawnee Press, Inc. (ASCAP); and Universal Edition A.G.

Special thanks to my friends at The University of Texas at Austin, especially fellow saxophone quartet members Rami El-Farrah, Sunil Gadgil, and Djamel Mami. Additional thanks go to my colleagues and students at Texas State University and to pianist Charlene Sutton. Most of all, thanks to my wife Cheryl and the rest of my family for the love and support they have always provided.

# **A Collection of Etudes Targeting Altissimo Passages in Alto Saxophone Solo Literature**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Erik Vincent Steighner, D.M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

Supervisors: Harvey C. Pittel and Andrew Dell'Antonio

Many texts and pedagogical works address the production of the saxophone's altissimo register. The focus of these resources, however, is predominantly directed towards initial altissimo production for intermediate players, as well as fingering choices, scales, and brief exercises for advanced performers. There is a current dearth of longer studies and etudes designed to bridge the gap between short exercises and the demands of solo repertoire.

In an attempt to remedy the relative lack of advanced instructional material, I have composed a collection of 14 etudes based on altissimo passages from the alto saxophone solo repertoire. The purpose of this project is twofold: to give players an opportunity to increase their technical proficiency in the altissimo register, and to demystify prominent solo passages by employing them in various forms.

Chapter One illustrates the near absence of altissimo etude collections by surveying existing altissimo resources including books, magazine and journal articles,

dissertations, and video and audio instructional materials. The chapter concludes with my views regarding successful altissimo production.

Chapter Two discusses my original etudes, which draw upon numerous compositional methods (applied separately and in combination) of transforming and integrating musical material from the original solo excerpts.

The 14 etudes are provided in their entirety in the Appendix. In general, they have a technical focus and are appropriate for performance during private lessons or master classes. Each one is relatively compact at one or two pages in length, with performance durations ranging from one to four minutes.

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## Introduction

The “standard” written range of the saxophone spans around two and a half octaves, from low B $\flat$  to high F $\sharp$  on most modern instruments.<sup>1</sup> The saxophone’s altissimo register is generally understood to comprise pitches above written high F $\sharp$  (or high F, for those lacking a high F $\sharp$  key). Depending on the skill of the performer and the member of the saxophone family being played, the altissimo range may encompass well over an octave.

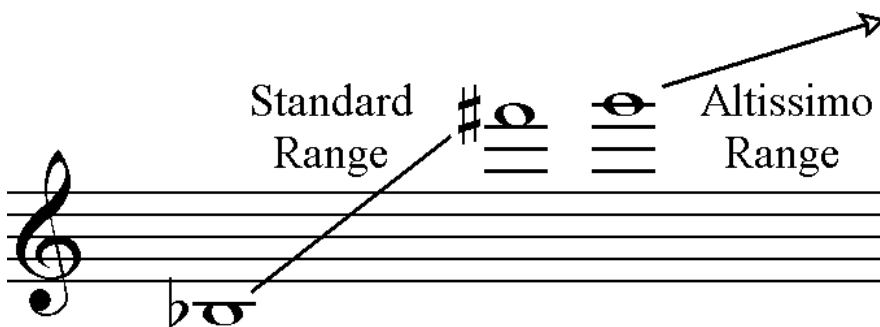


Illustration 1: The saxophone’s written range

Soon after the instrument’s invention by Adolphe Sax, written accounts by Hector Berlioz in 1842 and Georges Kastner in 1844 describe the saxophone as having a three-octave range.<sup>2</sup> However, Kastner maintains that “these three octaves are hardly used except by virtuosos and you are therefore advised to limit yourself to using two octaves and a half for orchestra writing.”<sup>3</sup> For approximately 90 years, many composers wrote within these constraints and few players pushed the saxophone’s range to its upper limits. The

<sup>1</sup> Many baritones are keyed to low A, and some modern instruments extend to high G.

<sup>2</sup> Hector Berlioz, “Musical Instruments—Monsieur Adolphe Sax,” *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* (12 June 1842), 3; Georges Kastner, *Traité général d’instrumentation*, supplement (Paris: Prilipp et Cie, 1844), 39. Both translated in Frederick Hemke, “The Early History of the Saxophone” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1976), 23, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Kastner, 39.

pioneering saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr blamed this on a lack of devoted study by early performers and an absence of documentation regarding the instrument's range, thereby causing several generations of composers to treat high F or F# as the saxophone's upper limit.<sup>4</sup>

While anecdotal evidence in a 1922 method book by David J. Bolduc dates altissimo playing to at least the 1870s or early 1880s, use of the altissimo register began to develop in earnest during the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Written evidence indicates that H. Benne Henton, soloist with the Sousa Band, had been employing altissimo since at least 1911.<sup>6</sup> Further use of altissimo was documented in Walter M. Eby's *Scientific Method for Saxophone*, which was published in 1922 and covered additional extended techniques such as multiple and flutter tonguing, slap tonguing, and effects such as the "laugh."<sup>7</sup> The same year witnessed fingerings charts up to altissimo A# (L.L. Lyon) and altissimo D (James Yunker), as well as the *Complete Course of Twelve Lessons in the Art of Playing Notes Above the Regular Saxophone Register* by Bolduc.<sup>8</sup> During the following year, high tones and harmonics were discussed in J. Beach Cragun's *The Business Saxophonist*.<sup>9</sup> Two 1925 methods, *Winn's How to Rag and Jazz on the Saxophone* and Art Horn's *Modern Method for the Saxophone*, included brief discussions of the altissimo register.<sup>10</sup> Gustav Bumcke described altissimo in his 1926 *Saxophon Schule*, and in 1927 the *Encyclopedia of Music and Dictionary of the Conservatory* included a fingering chart

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<sup>4</sup> Sigurd M. Raschèr, "The Saxophone—A 15-12-4 Instrument?" *The Instrumentalist* 24 (May 1970), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Cohen, "A High Altitude Reconnaissance: Some Very Early Accounts of the High Range," *The Saxophone Symposium* 3 (Fall 1978), 6.

<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in Henton's written-out cadenza from the solo *Eleven O'clock*, and later heard in his performance of *Laverne* from Victor's 1918 catalogue (Michael Hester, "A Study of the Saxophone Soloists Performing with the John Philip Sousa Band, 1893-1930" [D.M.A. diss., The University of Arizona, 1995], 49-50).

<sup>7</sup> Hemke, 276.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

that extended up to altissimo B $\flat$ .<sup>11</sup> Giuseppe Pettine's *Modern Method for the Saxophone* of 1928 discussed altissimo and tonal imagination, and in 1929 the *Ernst Modern Graded Studies for Saxophone* dismissed "artificial notes above high F" as impractical.<sup>12</sup> During the same year, the Brazilian saxophonist Ladario Teixeira published his own fingering chart that pushed the saxophone range up to double altissimo G, and as early as 1930 Arnold Schoenberg applied the altissimo register to orchestral tenor and bass saxophones in *Von Heute auf Morgen*.<sup>13</sup>

Sigurd Raschèr asserted that he was unaware of previous altissimo developments as he began to "play above the key range" in 1928.<sup>14</sup> During the following decade, composers such as Jacques Ibert, Lars-Erik Larsson, and Frank Martin wrote major solo works for Raschèr that fully utilized the altissimo range. Its use proliferated rapidly, and today many players can execute technically demanding passages spanning well over three octaves. The ability to play altissimo notes depends largely on awareness and control of various throat settings, with other factors including fingering choices, reed, and mouthpiece. Understandably, many newcomers to this difficult register are frustrated by a lack of immediate progress, finding the altissimo range to be more challenging than other registers of the instrument. Though altissimo is now commonly used by intermediate and advanced players, it nevertheless remains troublesome for many. Difficulties in performing altissimo passages arise from the physical production of the notes, the execution of complex fingerings, the preservation of tonal or timbral consistency and accurate intonation, the execution of clean articulations, and the

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<sup>11</sup> Hemke, 282; Claude Delangle and Jean-Denis Michat, "The Contemporary Saxophone," trans. Peter Nichols, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 166.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Hemke, 282-283; Delangle and Michat, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Raschèr, "The Saxophone—A 15-12-4 Instrument?" 50.

continuation of the musical line. Achieving all of these goals in spite of the task's perceived difficulty creates yet another challenge for the performer.

Many texts and pedagogical works address the production of the altissimo register (these will be surveyed in the first chapter). The focus of these resources, however, is predominantly directed towards initial altissimo production for intermediate players, as well as fingering choices, scales, and brief exercises for advanced players. There is a current dearth of longer studies and etudes designed to bridge the gap between short exercises and the demands of solo repertoire. One example of such a resource is *Altissimo Repertoire Etudes* (1989) by Jāmal Rossi.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this volume omits many modern works due to its age and is targeted largely towards altissimo novices. Timothy O'Dell wrote a collection of challenging *Concert Etudes: For Saxophone Altissimo Development* in 1999, but these six etudes are intended for performance and do not quote passages from concert repertoire.<sup>16</sup> A new method book by Paul Cohen, *The Altissimo Primer* (2008), targets players who already have some experience with overtones and altissimo, but the overall focus of the text is on tone and technical development through short exercises that do not extend past altissimo C.<sup>17</sup>

In an attempt to remedy the current shortage of advanced instructional material, I have composed a collection of 14 etudes based on altissimo passages from alto saxophone solo repertoire. The purpose of this project is twofold: to give players an opportunity to increase their technical proficiency in the altissimo register, and to demystify prominent solo passages by employing them in various forms.

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<sup>15</sup> Jāmal J. Rossi, *Altissimo Repertoire Etudes* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Author, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Jay O'Dell, "Concert Etudes: For Saxophone Altissimo Development" (D.M.A. essay, The University of Iowa, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Paul Cohen, *The Altissimo Primer* (Teaneck, N.J.: To the Fore Publishers, 2008).



To demonstrate the need for advanced etudes targeting the altissimo range, I begin Chapter One by cataloguing sources pertaining to the altissimo register, including books, magazine and journal articles, dissertations, and video and audio instructional materials. It should become evident that while there are many resources dealing with the altissimo register, few are targeted specifically at the advanced saxophonist who is already proficient at altissimo playing. I close the chapter with my views regarding altissimo production.

Chapter Two discusses my original etudes, which draw upon numerous compositional methods (applied separately and in combination) of transforming and integrating musical material from the original solo excerpts. Some of these techniques are as follows:

- Melodic lines are broken up into smaller, more manageable passages.
- Pitch material is presented at different rhythmic levels, including fast passages in augmentation and slow passages in diminution.
- Excerpts are altered through various transpositions.
- Existing passages are preceded by or extended with new musical material.
- Traits of the original passages such as dynamics and articulation are altered to make practice easier or to provide new performance problems.
- Freely composed musical episodes that provide extra technical and musical challenges occur between transformations of the original material.

In general, the etudes have a technical focus and are appropriate for performance during private lessons or master classes. They are relatively compact at one or two pages in length, with performance durations ranging from one to four minutes so as not to overly tax the performer. After learning these highly challenging etudes, performance of the original solo passages should seem significantly easier by comparison.

## Chapter 1: Altissimo Register Resources

### SAXOPHONE METHOD BOOKS (GENERAL)

In order to illustrate the relative lack of pedagogical materials targeting the accomplished altissimo performer, I will briefly catalogue a broad range of instructional resources available to saxophonists. Many general method books include sections discussing the altissimo register. They include *The Art of Saxophone Playing* (1963) by Larry Teal, *Guide to Teaching Woodwinds* (1990) by Frederick W. Westphal, *Developing a Personal Saxophone Sound* (1994) by David Liebman, *Saxophone* (1995) by Paul Harvey, *Saxophone Master Classes* by Michael Hester (1998), *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* (1998) by a variety of contributors, and *The Complete Saxophonist* by James Houlik and Eric Lauver (2008).<sup>18</sup> Collectively, these works address topics including acoustics, altissimo history and pedagogy, overtone and altissimo production, brief overtone and altissimo exercises, and altissimo fingerings.

### ALTISSIMO METHOD BOOKS

While the previously mentioned sources discuss altissimo to at least some degree, in an increasing number of method books the altissimo register has become the primary focus. They include *Top-Tones for the Saxophone: Four-Octave Range* (1941) by Sigurd Raschèr, *Studies in High Harmonics* (1946) by Ted Nash, *Sam Donahue's High Note Book for Saxophone* (1958), *Saxophone High Tones* (1978) by Eugene Rousseau,

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<sup>18</sup> Larry Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing* (Miami, Fla.: Summy-Birchard Music, 1963); David Liebman, *Developing a Personal Saxophone Sound*, 2d ed. (Medfield, Mass: Dorn Publications, 1994); Michael Hester, *Saxophone Master Classes*, 2d ed. (Tucson, Ariz.: Smooth Stone Productions, 2003); Jean-Marie Londeix, *Hello! Mr. Sax (Parameters of the Saxophone)* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1989); Paul Harvey, *Saxophone* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1995); Richard Ingham, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Frederick W. Westphal, *Guide to Teaching Woodwinds*, 5th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1990); James Houlik and Eric Lauver, *The Complete Saxophonist* (Glenmoore, Pa.: Northeastern Music Publications, Inc., 2008).

*Beginning Studies in the Altissimo Register* (1988) by Rosemary Lang, *Saxophone Altissimo: High Note Development for the Contemporary Player* (1992) by Robert Luckey, *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* (1992) by Donald Sinta and Denise Dabney, and *The Altissimo Primer* (2008) by Paul Cohen.<sup>19</sup>

All of these methods contain altissimo fingering charts and many address topics related to altissimo production and pedagogy. To further develop the player's technique, most of the authors include altissimo scales and arpeggios, brief altissimo exercises, simple melodies or short solos in the upper register, and exercises targeting the palm keys as well as front E and F.

#### **ALTISSIMO ETUDE BOOKS**

While etude books targeting the altissimo register are rare, at least two collections are currently available. Jāmal Rossi's *Altissimo Repertoire Etudes* (1989) is similar to my own project in concept, though most of Rossi's etudes target only a single measure or passage from the alto saxophone solo repertoire.<sup>20</sup> Etude lengths range from 9-46 measures (not including da capos) and no works after the 1970s are cited. Due to their limited focus, the etudes do not present significant technical challenges for the experienced altissimo performer.

In contrast to Rossi's collection, Timothy O'Dell's *Concert Etudes: For Saxophone Altissimo Development* are extremely difficult and are intended for concert

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<sup>19</sup> Sigurd M. Raschèr, *Top-Tones for the Saxophone: Four-Octave Range*, 3d ed. (New York: Carl Fischer, 1977); Ted Nash, *Studies in High Harmonics* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1946); Sam Donahue, *Sam Donahue's High Note Book for Saxophone* (New York: Consolidated Music Publishers, Inc., 1958); Eugene Rousseau, *Saxophone High Tones* (Bloomington, Ind.: Etoile Music, 1978); Rosemary Lang, *Beginning Studies in the Altissimo Register*, rev. ed. (Indianapolis, Ind.: Lang Music Publications, 1988); Robert A. Luckey, *Saxophone Altissimo: High Note Development for the Contemporary Player*, 2d ed. (Lafayette, La.: Olympia Music Publishing, 1998); Donald Sinta and Denise C. Dabney, *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* (Laurel, Md.: Sintafest Music Co., 1992); Cohen, *The Altissimo Primer*.

<sup>20</sup> Rossi's etude collection does not appear to be listed in any library catalogue, though it is available for order through Hickey's Music Center in Ithaca, New York (available at <http://www.hickeys.com> or by phone at 1-800-Hickeys).

performance.<sup>21</sup> In general, they begin in a comfortable register and gradually make their way into the altissimo, reflecting their conception as concert works rather than study etudes. The collection presents altissimo-related performance problems including wide leaps, rapid passages, challenging dynamic changes, varying articulations, and long lyrical phrases.

## ARTICLES

As a supplement to books and study methods, players may wish to consult articles discussing the altissimo register. These appear fairly regularly in publications such as the *Saxophone Journal*, *The Instrumentalist*, and *NACWPI Journal*, the back issues of which are available in many university libraries.

Several articles review altissimo-specific resources. “Comparing Saxophone Altissimo Books” (2002-2003) by Jason Adams is a three-part series that discusses altissimo books by Raschèr, Nash, Lang, Rousseau, Luckey, and Sinta/Dabney.<sup>22</sup> Steven Mauk’s “Creative Teaching Techniques: Saxophone Etude Books” (2000) presents an annotated list of traditional and contemporary saxophone etude books, several of which contain altissimo passages.<sup>23</sup> In “Getting High on the Saxophone: A Review of Altissimo Method Books” (1985), Clive G. Downs provides an overview and evaluation of nine altissimo-related books, including those by Raschèr, Lang, Teal, and Nash.<sup>24</sup>

Other articles focus on pedagogy, including “Exploring the Altissimo Register of the Saxophone” (1978) by Robert Black, “Developing the Altissimo Register” (1984) by

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<sup>21</sup> O’Dell’s etudes (included as part of his doctoral essay) are stored in the Rita Benson Music Library at the University of Iowa and must be obtained via interlibrary loan or directly from the author, who requests to be contacted for orders via email at [songz@suscom-maine.net](mailto:songz@suscom-maine.net) or by phone at (207) 721-0649.

<sup>22</sup> Jason Adams, “Comparing Saxophone Altissimo Books (Parts I-III),” *Saxophone Journal* 26- 27 (May/June 2002-January/February 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Steven Mauk, “Creative Teaching Techniques: Saxophone Etude Books,” *Saxophone Journal* 25 (November/December 2000): 4-8.

<sup>24</sup> Downs, Clive G., “Getting High on the Saxophone: A Review of Altissimo Method Books,” *Saxophone Journal* 10/1 (Spring 1985): 17-20.

Frank F. Bongiorno, “Improved Saxophone Intonation Through Altissimo Exercises” (2000) by Jeremy Brown, and “Sound Improvement Through Harmonics” (1988-89) by Jāmal Rossi.<sup>25</sup>

Still others focus primarily on altissimo fingerings, including Frank F. Bongiorno’s six-part “Saxophone Performance Techniques: Saxophone Altissimo Fingerings” (1999-2000) and “High Notes for Saxophone” (1974) by Santy Runyon.<sup>26</sup> Saxophonists experienced with altissimo production and who are learning works utilizing quarter-tones could consult “Altissimo Quarter-Tones for Alto Saxophone” by Todd Rewoldt (2000), which provides several pages of quarter-tone fingering with four options each.<sup>27</sup>

Many articles include a mix of topics including altissimo history or personal reflections on altissimo playing experiences. “A High Altitude Reconnaissance: Some Very Early Accounts of the High Range Above F” (1978) by Paul Cohen looks back to source material from the early twentieth century in an effort to document the early spread of altissimo playing, with particular emphasis on its treatment in method books and articles.<sup>28</sup> Eric Marienthal’s “Artist In Residence: The Altissimo Range” (1992) is a casual reflection on concepts for success with high notes.<sup>29</sup> In “The Saxophone—A 15-12-4 Instrument?” (1970) Sigurd Raschèr provides a concise discussion of the

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Black, “Exploring the Altissimo Register of the Saxophone,” *The Instrumentalist* 32 (April 1978): 48-49; Frank F. Bongiorno, “Developing the Altissimo Register,” *The Saxophone Symposium* 9 (Fall 1984): 9-10; Jeremy Brown, “Improved Saxophone Intonation Through Altissimo Exercises,” *The Instrumentalist* 55 (November 2000): 49-54; Jāmal J. Rossi, “Sound Improvement Through Harmonics,” *NACWPI Journal* 37 (Winter 1988-1989): 8-13.

<sup>26</sup> Frank F. Bongiorno, “Saxophone Performance Techniques: Saxophone Altissimo Fingerings (Parts I-VI),” *Saxophone Journal* 23-25 (July/August 1999-November/December 2000); Santy Runyon, “High Notes for Saxophone” *The Instrumentalist* (December 1974), 56.

<sup>27</sup> Todd Rewoldt, “Altissimo Quarter-Tones for Alto Saxophone” *The Saxophone Symposium* 25 (2000), 56-70.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Cohen, “A High Altitude Reconnaissance: Some Very Early Accounts of the High Range,” *The Saxophone Symposium* 3 (Fall 1978): 6-14.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Marienthal, “Artist In Residence: The Altissimo Range,” *Saxophone Journal* 17 (July/August 1992): 4-5.

saxophone's origins, addresses the flowering of the altissimo register during the 1930s, and argues for its precedent in the original wishes of Adolphe Sax.<sup>30</sup> Finally, Jāmal Rossi's "The Altissimo Register of the Saxophone: A Comprehensive Bibliography" (1990) is a highly thorough (though dated) compilation of materials relating to the saxophone's altissimo register.<sup>31</sup>

## DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

While many saxophone-related dissertations address altissimo in some capacity, there are several works that make the register their primary focus. It should be noted that the previously mentioned *Concert Etudes: For Saxophone Altissimo Development* are included as part of Timothy O'Dell's doctoral essay of the same title.

Timothy Feldkamp's *Developing the Altissimo Register of the Soprano, Alto, and Tenor Saxophones* discusses altissimo production and provides fingering charts, register break exercises, scales, arpeggios, patterns, and a daily lesson plan for practice.<sup>32</sup> In *A Fiber-Optic Study Comparing Perceived and Actual Tongue Positions of Saxophonists Successfully Producing Tones in the Altissimo Register*, Matthew Patnode uses a fiber-optic scope to observe the tongue position of saxophonists playing in the altissimo register.<sup>33</sup> In a somewhat similar inquiry, Randall Smith uses a fluoroscope to conduct *An Investigation of the Relationship Between Mouthpiece Pitches and the Altissimo Register of the Alto Saxophone*.<sup>34</sup> In a work indirectly related to altissimo performance,

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<sup>30</sup> Raschèr, "The Saxophone—A 15-12-4 Instrument?", 49-51. Presumably, the article's title refers to partials of the overtone series, though Raschèr's terminology is not explained.

<sup>31</sup> Jāmal J. Rossi, "The Altissimo Register of the Saxophone: A Comprehensive Bibliography," *NACWPI Journal* 38 (Summer 1990): 7-13.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Lee Feldkamp, "Developing the Altissimo Register of the Soprano, Alto, and Tenor Saxophones" (D.M.A. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1990).

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Andrew Patnode, "A Fiber-Optic Study Comparing Perceived and Actual Tongue Positions of Saxophonists Successfully Producing Tones in the Altissimo Register" (D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Randall A. Smith, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between Mouthpiece Pitches and the Altissimo Register of the Alto Saxophone," (D.M. diss., Indiana University, 1994).

*A Study of Harmonics for Woodwind Instruments* by Ralph Carl Verdi includes a chapter devoted to saxophone harmonics.<sup>35</sup>

## OTHER MEDIA

Besides the many printed sources dealing with the altissimo register, there are additional recorded materials that provide demonstrations of altissimo and overtone exercises. Primary among these is Dale Underwood's *Saxophone Journal* master class CD, *The Altissimo Register*.<sup>36</sup> The disc includes musical performances, an introduction to altissimo, an explanation and demonstration of the overtone series, a discussion of fingerings, and a question-and-answer session with Underwood and Timothy Roberts.

In addition to Underwood's audio resource, two videos touch on overtone production and the altissimo register. Ira Jay Weinstein's videotaped lesson/interview *The Master Speaks: Joe Allard's Clarinet & Saxophone Principles* includes a demonstration of overtones that extend into the altissimo range, though there is no specific discussion of the altissimo register.<sup>37</sup> Donald Sinta's instructional video, *Sinta on Sax*, touches on altissimo and overtone production in the last 20 minutes of the program.<sup>38</sup>

## ALTISSIMO TECHNIQUE RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following paragraphs, I would like to share my own observations about altissimo production, which have been greatly influenced by my studies with Harvey Pittel at The University of Texas at Austin.

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<sup>35</sup> Ralph Carl Verdi, "A Study of Harmonics for Woodwind Instruments," (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1991).

<sup>36</sup> Dale Underwood, "Saxophone Journal Masterclass CD: The Altissimo Register," *Saxophone Journal* 21 (September-October 1996). CD.

<sup>37</sup> Joe Allard and Ira Jay Weinstein, *Joe Allard's Clarinet and Saxophone Principles* (Van Nuys, Calif.: Backstage Pass Productions, Inc., 1991). VHS.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Sinta, *Sinta on Sax* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1986). VHS.

Altissimo begins in the mind. As performers, we must continually maintain and refine a vivid tone imagination, hearing the desired pitch and tone quality of the notes we wish to produce. The motor area of the brain, controlling both the voluntary and involuntary muscles involved in playing, translates the imagined tone into signals that the body obeys automatically and subconsciously. Tension hinders this process, so it is best to avoid any excess pressure in the embouchure or constriction in the throat which may interfere with the brain's commands. Tightness in the tongue can also hinder tone production. I employ the forward coning tongue position. The front of the tongue is flat, resulting in a tunnel for the air between the tongue and the upper palate. The tip of the tongue sits just below the tip of the reed. Lifting the tongue creates an effect similar to putting one's thumb in a hose nozzle, compressing the available water pressure into a smaller space and increasing its speed. In addition to intensifying the airstream, this tongue position also reduces tension when articulating, as the tip must only move a small distance to stop the reed from vibrating.

The higher pitches on the saxophone require the reed to vibrate with greater speed, and it is important to have a reed with enough strength to withstand this intense activity. The lower teeth and jaw push the lip against the reed with varying degrees of force. A slight increase in this jaw pressure will press the reed closer to the mouthpiece, thereby causing it to vibrate faster. As one proceeds further into the altissimo range, it becomes necessary to move the jaw forward (this may be a matter of millimeters) in order to play on a thicker portion of the cane and ensure that the reed will not close at the tip. Using less lip over the bottom teeth may help achieve the desired result. The point at which the jaw shifts will vary between performers; I have found that some players shift between altissimo B $\flat$ /B or altissimo C $\sharp$ /D. The more one relies on pitch control through



various throat settings, the later this shift may occur. I typically move the jaw forward and use less lip during the transition from altissimo D# to E.

A daily regimen of overtone exercises helps develop the muscle memory that springs into action when one imagines a desired pitch. In addition to the regular practice of exercises developing tone imagination and throat settings, one should work for the complete integration of altissimo notes into scale and arpeggio practice. After researching and experimenting with fingerings that create the best balance between tone quality, intonation, and ease of technique, pencil them onto your sheet music until they become second nature. One may also wish to maintain an altissimo “flowchart” that catalogues fingering progressions conducive to a smooth technique. During practice, scales should first be slurred in order to ensure that there are no uneven spots and to allow for greater mental focus on the various physical sensations involved. Tongued scales may come next; players with problems articulating altissimo notes should practice alternating between “hee” and “tee” attacks on various upper register pitches while maintaining the same tongue position. I have also found that repeated tonguing at different speeds on various overtones encourages one to articulate with minimal movement. If the throat setting is correct but the desired note is not produced when tonguing, then it is likely that excess motion has occurred.

Altissimo notes may prove elusive and unstable to many, but with devoted practice one will begin to conceptualize this register as part of the saxophone’s standard range. Divisions between the “normal” and “extended” range blur as altissimo is assimilated into one’s technique through daily practice. With so many works calling for the assured performance of complex and demanding altissimo passages, it is crucial for the modern performer to be secure in his or her upper range abilities.

## **Chapter 2: Altissimo Etudes**

### **GOALS**

Many pedagogical resources focus predominantly on altissimo production concepts, usually providing some combination of fingerings, scales, and brief exercises. Few collections of etudes targeting the altissimo register have appeared since the saxophone's inception. However, composers have made difficult altissimo demands on performers for decades, and there is a current need for further pedagogical materials targeting the advanced saxophonist who is already skilled at altissimo production. Just as performers work on etudes in the lower registers to hone their technical abilities, so too should they challenge themselves in the altissimo range. My collection of 14 etudes is designed to be as practical as possible and to reflect the demands of professional playing. Therefore, the musical material almost constantly references altissimo passages from prominent or challenging alto saxophone solo literature.

While the etudes may be studied without prior knowledge of the various works referenced, the purpose of the collection is not only to increase players' technical proficiency in the altissimo register, but also to demystify difficult solo passages by employing them repeatedly in various forms. After practicing the excerpts and their various transformations many times over, performance of the original passages should seem easier by comparison.

### **INITIAL OBSERVATIONS**

The remainder of Chapter Two will be spent detailing the process by which I drew from existing solo passages and reworked them for focused high register study. When discussing the quoted musical sources, I will refer to the original pieces' measure

numbers if they are printed in the score and to rehearsal markings if no measure numbers are present. Whenever possible, I will refer to quoted sources' measure numbers in parentheses in order to differentiate them from the etudes' passages.

To keep the discussion relatively brief and focused on my own etudes, I will not include musical examples illustrating the excerpted solo passages in their original settings. Each etude draws on multiple examples from up to twelve different saxophone works, the inclusion of which would create a morass of additional illustrations to distract the reader. Most saxophonists skilled enough to play the following etudes will probably be familiar with and have access to many of the works discussed, so I feel confident in keeping my analysis limited to a verbal catalogue of the borrowings. Ultimately, the etudes may be played without knowledge of the various works referenced.

In similar attempt to keep the discussion streamlined, altissimo fingerings will not be provided during the description of each etude. There are many fingering lexicons available to saxophonists in print, online, and from private instructors; ultimately each performer must experiment to discover the fingerings that work best for him or her. My etudes are targeted towards advanced performers, many of whom already prefer several fingerings for each altissimo note. Finally, because the etudes are comprised almost entirely of altissimo register passages, it would be impractical to provide fingering suggestions for the many hundreds of note progressions in the collection.

I avoided composing excessive repetitions into the etudes, reasoning that many of the passages will be broken up into smaller sections and practiced repeatedly. I also assumed that most players will be somewhat familiar with many of the quoted passages, and that stating them exactly in their original form would often prove too redundant. In general, quoted passages are subject to fragmentation, transposition, rhythmic augmentation or diminution, combination with other excerpts, or other transformations

that provide extra challenge or insight into the performance techniques involved. While I did not invoke a stringent rule about employing *8va* markings, I did include them for most phrases traveling above altissimo D.

It is not necessary to work through the etudes in numerical order. Challenges common to many of them include the mastery of accurate and often rapid tonguing in the altissimo register, crossing the altissimo break by various intervals and with different articulations, developing the stamina needed to execute lengthy passages in the high range, maintaining accurate intonation, and keeping a consistent tempo despite the often complex fingering choices in the altissimo range.

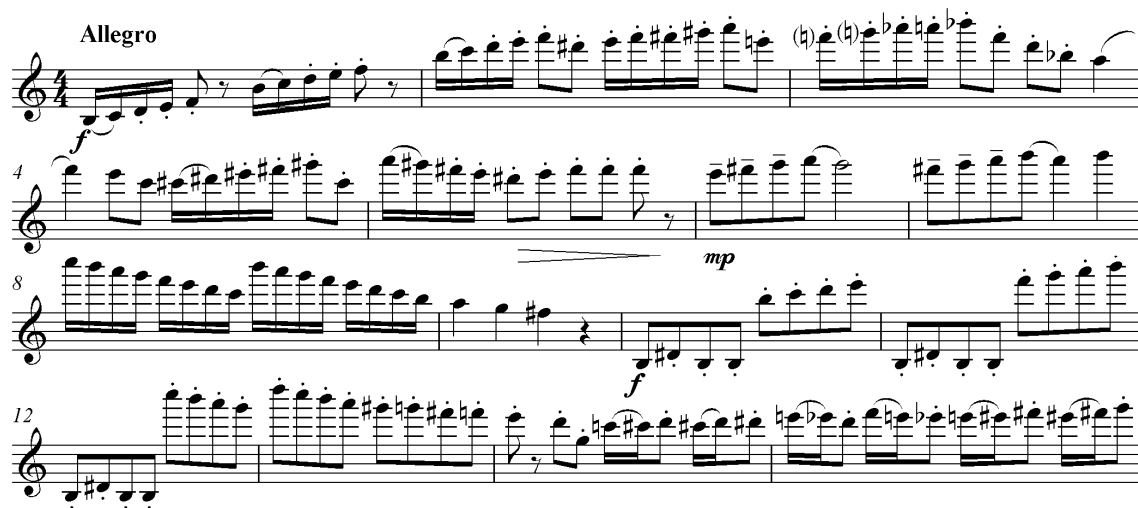
While they incorporate altissimo excerpts from numerous works, these etudes touch on only a small portion of the alto saxophone repertoire utilizing the altissimo register, not to mention other such pieces for soprano, tenor, baritone, bass, sopranino, and contrabass saxophones. Due to the high volume of available works, I was forced to leave out compositions by Luciano Berio, Edison Denisov, Jindřich Feld, John Harbison, Donald Martino, Robert Muczynski, Ryo Noda, Claude T. Smith, Piet Swerts, Jacob ter Veldhuis, Charles Wuorinen, Takashi Yoshimatsu, and many more.

#### **ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 1: ARTICULATED ADJACENT NOTES CROSSING THE BREAK**

Traversing the break between the saxophone's high F (or F#) and altissimo G is one of the first challenges encountered by players as they venture into the altissimo register, and the addition of articulations can create further hurdles to confident performance. Tongued adjacent notes crossing over the altissimo break occur in the third movement of *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* by Ingolf Dahl and the first movement of *Concertino da Camera* by Jacques Ibert.

*Altissimo Etude No. 1* opens with pitch material from the Dahl *Concerto* (one measure before Rehearsal F), starting in the low register of the alto saxophone and

rapidly ascending into the altissimo range via five notes drawn from the Ibert *Concertino* (one measure before Rehearsal #5). This material is transposed up a half step, and after some brief transitional figures the articulation switches from staccato to legato as freely composed scalar figures cross the altissimo break in both directions. The mood shifts in mm. 10-12 as low register pitch material from the Dahl *Concerto* (11 measures before Rehearsal F) alternates with further passages crossing the break. A diatonic figure gives way to a descending chromatic passage which then ascends in mm. 14-15 in a more complex transformation.

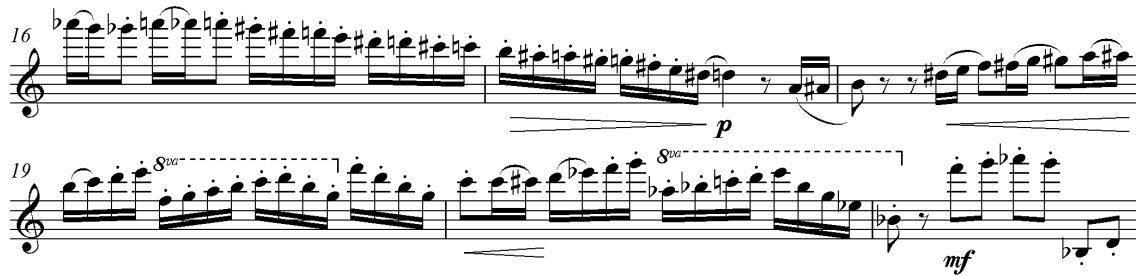


Musical Example 1: *Altissimo Etude No. 1*, mm. 1-15

Ingolf Dahl, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*, copyright © 1977 European American Music Corporation, copyright © renewed, all rights reserved, used by permission of European American Music Corporation; Jacques Ibert, *Concertino da Camera*, copyright © 1935 by Alphonse Leduc & Cie, owner and publisher for the world, Paris, France.

Measures 16-17 present a passage in retrograde from the Ibert *Concertino* (three measures prior to Rehearsal #5), followed by a slightly truncated quotation in m 18-19 from the Dahl *Concerto* (three measures prior to Rehearsal F). A brief V-I figure extends the ending before leading to another statement of the previous Dahl excerpt in a higher

transposition. Decreasing the emphasis on the original terminal notes of these quoted passages should help to reduce any anxiety felt by the saxophonist as he or she prepares the ascent to these pitches in performance.



Musical Example 2: *Altissimo Etude No. 1*, mm. 16-21

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A variation of the earlier low-to-high eighth-note figure from mm. 10-12 returns in mm. 21-23, preparing a lengthy section of freely composed tongued sixteenth notes. The register shifts in preparation for a literal quotation in mm. 28-30 of the Ibert melody, again extended with new material after the original terminal note. The etude closes with a figure that combines scale elements from both the Ibert and Dahl excerpts. During the course of the etude, every whole-step or half-step transition between high F, high F#, altissimo G, and altissimo G# is presented in both ascending and descending form.



Musical Example 3: *Altissimo Etude No. 1*, mm. 22-34

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## ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 2: SLURRED ADJACENT NOTES CROSSING THE BREAK

Slurring over the altissimo register break while maintaining smoothness of sound and accuracy of intonation presents a number of difficulties to the performer. Nevertheless, a host of works include passagework that slurs over the break by half step or whole step, often with great rapidity. *Altissimo Etude No. 2* includes examples of such passages from concertos by Ingolf Dahl and Lars-Erik Larsson, sonatas by David Diamond and David Maslanka, and *Symphonic Rhapsody* by John Anthony Lennon.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> David Diamond, *Sonata for E♭ Alto Saxophone and Piano* (New York: Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc., 1993); Lars-Erik Larsson, *Konsert för Saxofon Och Stråkorkester* (Stockholm: Gehrman Musikförlag, 1952); John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody* (New York: C.F. Peters Corporation,

The etude begins with chromatically-inflected materials in a comfortable register before moving into the altissimo range in m. 4. During mm. 4-6, every combination of adjacent notes crossing the altissimo break (in both directions) is employed, including F-G, F $\sharp$ -G, and F $\sharp$ -G $\sharp$ . A quote from the first movement of the Larsson *Concerto* (m. 78) appears in m. 7, though the last eighth note is altered to preserve a loose sense of E minor. Transpositions in mm. 10-11 of a four-note figure from the first movement of the Dahl *Concerto* (one beat prior to Rehearsal D) precedes pitch material in m. 12 drawn from the first movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody* (m. 100, mm. 194-195, and mm. 208-209). Measures 13-15 focus explicitly on stepwise intervals crossing the break.

Andantino

Musical Example 4: *Altissimo Etude No. 2*, mm. 1-14

Lars-Erik Larsson, *Konsert för Saxofon Och Stråkorkester*, copyright © 1934 Gehrman's Musikförlag AB, Stockholm, printed by permission; John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody*, copyright © 1984 by C.F. Peters Corporation, used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

Measure 15 concludes with a four-note quote from the first movement of the Diamond *Sonata* (m. 105) that joins to restatements of the previous Larsson *Concerto* material at both original and transposed levels. In mm. 19-21 the previous Lennon

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1984); David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (The North American Saxophone Alliance, 1988).



quotation is rhythmically simplified and broken into six-note groups that rise with each repetition, leading to a more literal quotation in the latter half of m. 21. This climactic rise extends to altissimo E $\flat$ , followed by a descent of fourths and fifths that create added intonation and endurance challenges.

The musical score for *Altissimo Etude No. 2*, measures 15-25, is presented on a single staff in treble clef. The notation includes various dynamics and articulations. Measures 15-18 feature a rising six-note group with dynamics *mf*, *f*, and *mp*. Measures 19-20 show a six-note group with a *cresc.* marking. Measures 21-25 show a six-note group with dynamics *ff* and *p*.

Musical Example 5: *Altissimo Etude No. 2*, mm. 15-25

David Diamond, *Sonata for E $\flat$  Alto Saxophone and Piano*, copyright © 1993 by Southern Music Pub. Co. Inc., used by permission, all rights reserved; Lars-Erik Larsson, *Konsert för Saxofon Och Stråkorkester*, copyright © 1934 Gehrman's Musikförlag AB, Stockholm, printed by permission; John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody*, copyright © 1984 by C.F. Peters Corporation, used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

Beginning in m. 24, the remainder of *Altissimo Etude No. 2* centers on material from the Maslanka *Sonata*. The first borrowing originates in mm. 118-119 of the first movement and appears in a truncated and rhythmically augmented form. In m. 27 the pitch material is restated at the sixteenth-note level with extra repetitions of each note pair. Measures 29-31 draw on mm. 64-65 of the same movement. The quotation is extended through three additional transpositions in order to delay the climax on altissimo C. A brief E minor cadence provides a final challenge as the performer must negotiate wide leaps while maintaining a smooth decrescendo.

Musical Example 6: *Altissimo Etude No. 2*, mm. 21-33

David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, copyright © 1984 by North American Saxophone Alliance, all rights reserved, used by permission.

### ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 3: RAPID TONGUING ON REPEATED NOTES

After initial success in the altissimo register, many performers encounter difficulties when attempting to cleanly articulate pitches. After this problem is overcome by keeping the tongue light and maintaining the proper throat settings, further challenges arise when one encounters instances of rapid tonguing at quiet dynamics. Such passages occur in the second and third movements of *Sonata* by William Albright and *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble* by Alec Wilder.<sup>40</sup>

My third etude is largely based on the tongued sixteenths on altissimo A at the conclusion of the third movement of the Albright *Sonata* (four and seven measures after

<sup>40</sup> William Albright, *Sonata* (New York: Henmar Press, Inc., 1990); Alec Wilder, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble* (Newton Centre, Mass.: Wilder Music, Inc., 1989).

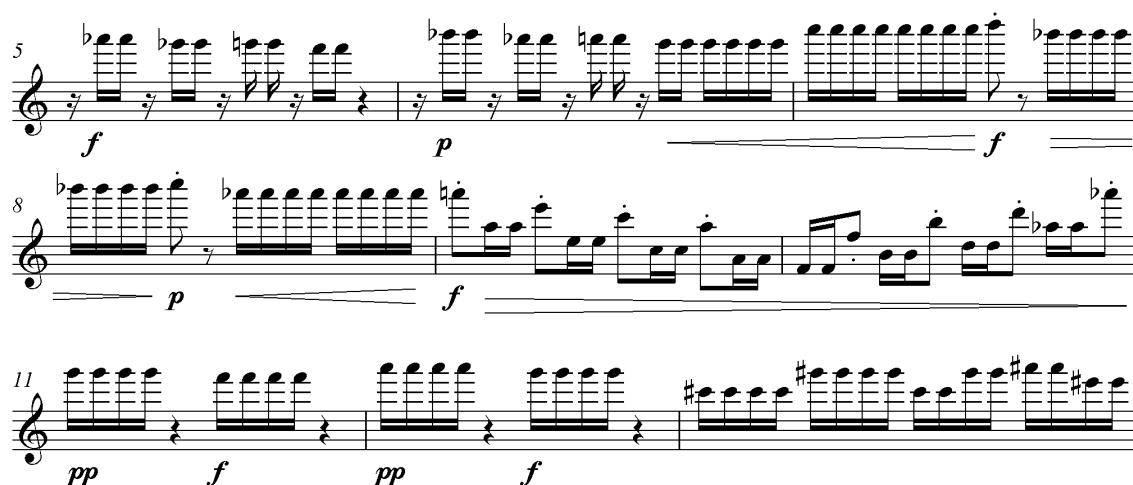
Rehearsal J). The etude begins at a comfortable forte and does not cross into the altissimo register until the second measure. Note values are gradually reduced from quarter notes to sixteenth notes in order to ease the performer into the rapid tonguing on which the etude focuses. This relaxed beginning should help the saxophonist establish a comfortable volume, full tone, and stable pitch center before he or she moves on to the more challenging material. In the second measure, forte sixteenth notes are followed by a pianissimo group, after which the opening measures are restated at a new pitch level. Measure four marks the first occurrence of the tongued passage derived from the third movement of the Albright *Sonata*. Though the quoted sixteenths occur in groups of four, I begin my etude with clusters of five notes in order to give the performer a sense of momentum leading towards each new beat.



Musical Example 7: *Altissimo Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4

William Albright, *Sonata*, copyright © 1990 by Henmar Press, Inc., used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

Measures 5-8 continue the previous dynamic contrasts, establishing a more complex rhythm and gradually increasing the number of consecutive tongued notes. Measures 9-10 introduce difficult octave leaps, made slightly easier due to the staccato eighth notes falling on the downbeats in m. 9 and the offbeats in m. 10. Measures 11-12 restate a truncated version of the opening four measures and strip away the fifth note of each group in order to more closely imitate the original Albright passage.



Musical Example 8: *Altissimo Etude No. 3*, mm. 5-13

William Albright, *Sonata*, copyright © 1990 by Henmar Press, Inc., used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

Measure 13 introduces material from the first movement of the Wilder *Concerto* (mm. 101-103). The passage appears transposed and expanded before appearing in mm. 15-16 at its original pitch level, though somewhat truncated. Measures 17-20 focus on more octave-based materials, leading to a transposition of mm. 5-8 in mm. 21-24. Measures 24-27 imitate the repeated articulations on altissimo A $\sharp$  and G $\sharp$  in the second movement of the Albright *Sonata* (one and four measures before Rehearsal D). Beginning in m. 28 a written-out ritardando on isolated altissimo G's gives the performer an opportunity to work on note attacks and tapers. The etude closes with two measures of tongued sixteenths on altissimo A at varying dynamics in a final reference to the Albright *Sonata*.

Musical Example 9: *Altissimo Etude No. 3*, mm. 11-33

William Albright, *Sonata*, copyright © 1990 by Henmar Press, Inc., used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation; Alec Wilder, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble*, copyright © 1966 (renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI); international copyright secured, all rights reserved, used by permission.

**ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 4: ISOLATED ALTISSIMO NOTES**

The first altissimo notes encountered by saxophonists are often the isolated altissimo pitches at the close of the *Concerto* by Alexander Glazunov, near the end of the

first movement of the *Sonata* by Paul Creston, at the close of the *Sonata* by Bernhard Heiden, and in other works that employ only one or two high-register pitches (which often include a lower *ossia* part).<sup>41</sup> By contrast, many other works include rapid and difficult leaps to isolated altissimo pitches before immediately descending into the lower registers. *Altissimo Etude No. 4* is based on excerpts from the previously mentioned works and on the more difficult isolated leaps occurring in concertos by Henry Brant, Paul Creston, Pierre Max Dubois, and Karel Husa; sonatas by William Albright and Mark Kilstofte; *Symphonic Rhapsody* by John Anthony Lennon; and *Blue Caprice* by Victor Morosco.<sup>42</sup>

The etude begins with easier excerpts and moves towards progressively more difficult passages. Measures 1-2 quote the isolated altissimo G from the first movement of the Creston *Sonata* (m. 103), including its high F preparation and the ensuing B $\flat$  minor descending arpeggio. This leads into a rising B $\flat$  major arpeggio from opening cadenza of the Dubois *Concerto* (page three, stave six) that employs an optional altissimo B $\flat$  at its peak. Measures 6-7 restate the etude's opening material, and by changing the F's to E's, mm. 6-8 now reference the conclusion of the Glazunov *Concerto* (two and six measures after Rehearsal #55). The Dubois arpeggio is stated in retrograde and transposed, and mm. 12-13 reference isolated leaps to altissimo G from the third movement of the Heiden *Sonata* (final bar) and the first movement of the Brant *Concerto* (two measures before Rehearsal #15), as well as the concluding altissimo C from the Glazunov *Concerto* (two

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Creston, *Sonata* (Delaware Gap, Pa.: Shawnee Press, Inc., 1945); Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto en Mi $\flat$*  (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1936); Bernhard Heiden, *Sonata* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1943).

<sup>42</sup> Henry Brant, *Concerto for alto saxophone solo or trumpet solo, with nine instruments* (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1978); Paul Creston, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (or Band)* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1966); Pierre Max Dubois, *Concerto pour Saxophone alto et Orchestre à Cordes* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1959); Karel Husa, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Concert Band* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1972); Mark Kilstofte, *Sonata* (Greenville, S.C.: The Newmatic Press, 1999); Libby Larsen, *Holy Roller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Victor Morosco, *Blue Caprice* (Morsax Music, 1997).

measures from the end). A long altissimo G similar to that in the third movement of the Creston *Concerto* (mm. 165-166) creates an additional challenge with the added diminuendo to piano, and prepares a three-note quotation in m. 15 from the third movement of the Albright *Sonata* (one measure before Rehearsal D). This material is restated at different pitch levels (twice in retrograde) and leads to a sudden pianissimo altissimo Db.

**Allegretto**

**Musical Example 10: *Altissimo Etude No. 4*, mm. 1-20**

Henry Brant, *Concerto for alto saxophone solo or trumpet solo, with nine instruments*, copyright © 1978 by Carl Fischer, Inc., all rights reserved, used by permission; Paul Creston, *Sonata*, copyright © 1945 (renewed) by Templeton Publishing, a division of Shawnee Press, Inc. (ASCAP), international copyright secured, all rights reserved, used by permission; Pierre Max Dubois, *Concerto pour Saxophone alto et Orchestre à Cordes*, copyright © 1959 by Alphonse Leduc & Cie, owner and publisher for the world, Paris, France; Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto en Mi♭*, copyright © 1936 by Alphonse Leduc & Cie, owner and publisher for the world, Paris, France.

Another brief reference to the ending of the Glazunov *Concerto* in m. 18 leads to a lengthier borrowing in mm. 20-22 from the cadenza in first movement of the Albright *Sonata* (between Rehearsal Q and Rehearsal S). The source material is condensed to

focus on altissimo pitches and its rhythm is altered to fit within the etude's meter. Extra leaps are added at the end of the section and elide with a series of consecutive seventh intervals. A two-measure transition in mm. 25-26 references earlier excerpts from Heiden and Glazunov before leading to a restatement of the previous Albright borrowing (mm. 20-22), now slurred for extra challenge. The seventh intervals from mm. 23-24 return in mm. 29-30 and are transposed and restated at the sixteenth note level before eliding in m. 35 with a quote from *Blue Caprice* by Morosco (mm. 34-35).

The musical score consists of five systems of music, each starting with a measure number in the left margin:

- System 1 (Measures 21-25):** Measure 21 begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a series of sixteenth-note runs. A slur covers measures 21-25. Dynamic markings *mf* and *f* are present.
- System 2 (Measures 26-29):** Measure 26 starts with a slur from the previous system. The music continues with sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamic markings *mf* and *mp* are present.
- System 3 (Measures 30-32):** Measure 30 begins with a new key signature of one flat (Bb). The music features sixteenth-note runs. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present.
- System 4 (Measures 33-35):** Measure 33 continues the sixteenth-note patterns. A dynamic marking of *f* is present at the end of the system.
- System 5 (Measures 36-39):** Measure 36 continues the sixteenth-note patterns. A dynamic marking of *f* is present at the beginning. The system ends with a measure containing a complex interval marked with a superscripted 7 (7<sup>sup</sup>).

Musical Example 11: *Altissimo Etude No. 4*, mm. 21-39

William Albright, *Sonata*, copyright © 1990 by Henmar Press, Inc., used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation; Victor Morosco, *Blue Caprice*, copyright © 1981 by Morsax Music.



A transposition of the previous *Blue Caprice* material in mm. 37-39 leads to a rhythmically altered and slightly simplified borrowing in mm. 40-43 from the third movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody* (mm. 17-18), first transposed up a half step and then appearing at its original pitch level. The remainder of the etude focuses on isolated leaps at extremely soft dynamics, and the quotation and subsequent transposition in mm. 44-49 of material from the third movement of the Husa *Concerto* (four and five measures after Rehearsal #27) provides additional control and endurance challenges. A similar passage from the third movement of the Kilstofte *Sonata* (mm. 82-88) is stated in mm. 50-56 with rhythmic alteration and added leaps, and then repeated down a major second. This transposition provides extra challenges on the lowest notes, and leads to an altissimo G# that prepares a final allusion in mm. 57-58 to previously referenced pitch material from the third movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody*.

Musical Example 12: *Altissimo Etude No. 4*, mm. 40-58

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## ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 5: CHROMATIC PASSAGES

Chromatic passages in the altissimo register can pose fingering difficulties, and performance problems become more acute when one must also focus on the intonation of consecutive pitches separated by half steps. Some of the most difficult chromatic altissimo demands in the saxophone repertoire occur in the third movement of the *Sonata* by William Albright. Much of the material in *Altissimo Etude No. 5* is based upon passages from this significant work, along with brief borrowings from the fourth movement of *Concert Suite* by William Bolcom and *Holy Roller* by Libby Larsen.<sup>43</sup>

*Altissimo Etude No. 5* opens with a four-note quotation from the third movement of the Albright *Sonata* (one measure before Rehearsal J), slowing the sixteenth note motive into quarter notes and breaking it apart with half rests. The third measure reunites the quarter note motives and mm. 4-5 present the previous material down a half step, followed by further transpositions of the four-note main idea in mm. 6-9. Eighth notes are gradually introduced into the melodic line, and in m. 11 the four-note main idea appears in retrograde. The first sixteenth notes occur in mm. 12-13, presented in three-note groupings to make them easier on the performer. These brief runs lead to a rising sixteenth note passage from the fourth movement of the Bolcom *Concert Suite* (m. 86), first presented down a whole step with reversed articulations (tongue two, slur two) and then at its original pitch level and articulations. The climax on altissimo D# ties over into the first group of sixteenth-note sextuplets.

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<sup>43</sup> William Bolcom, *Concert Suite for E♭ Alto Saxophone and Band* (New York: Edward B. Marks Music Company and Bolcom Music, 1998).

**Allegro**

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff (measures 1-7) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes markings for mezzo-piano (*mp*) and piano (*p*). The second staff (measures 8-12) starts with mezzo-forte (*mf*) and includes mezzo-piano (*mp*) and mezzo-forte (*mf*). The third staff (measures 13-15) starts with forte (*f*) and includes mezzo-forte (*mf*) and fortissimo (*ff*). The fourth staff (measures 16-17) starts with forte (*f*) and includes a sextuplet marking (*6*). The tempo is marked **Allegro**.

**Musical Example 13: *Altissimo Etude No. 5*, mm. 1-17**

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Measures 17-18 include a mix of regular and sextuplet sixteenth notes that repeatedly cascade up and down over the break. Measures 19-27 are based on the earlier Albright figure, presented at various transpositions and linked by series of chromatic intervals, including ascending minor thirds (m. 20), descending major thirds (m. 22), ascending perfect fourths (mm. 24-25), and descending perfect fifths (mm. 26-27). This passage includes many four-note groups stated in the altissimo register and immediately repeated two octaves lower for added challenge.

18 *mf* *p*

20 *mp*

22 *f*

24 *p*

Musical Example 14: *Altissimo Etude No. 5*, mm. 18-25

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Scalar chromatic material returns in mm. 28-29, including a four-note figure from the Albright *Sonata*'s third movement (one after Rehearsal J). This leads into a literal quotation in m. 30 of a brief passage from *Holy Roller* by Larsen (mm. 63-64). The etude concludes with another motive from the third movement of the Albright *Sonata* (four measures after Rehearsal I), appearing first in broken form and then joined in retrograde, leading to a final sixteenth-note run and decrescendo to the etude's highest note, altissimo F.

Musical Example 15: *Altissimo Etude No. 5*, mm. 26-34

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#### ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 6: THROAT GLISSANDI/PORTAMENTI

One of the techniques called upon by composers of saxophone music is the throat glissando or portamento, a smooth slide from one note to another. Unlike the standard fingered glissando, individual chromatic pitches are not discernable during the transition, and the resulting sound approximates the glissando effect of the trombone's slide. On the saxophone this can be achieved through a combination of throat settings, tongue position, oral cavity manipulation, and jaw pressure. For wide ascending portamenti, it is advisable to finger a chromatic scale while constantly bending the pitch slightly below the corresponding fingerings in order to create a seamless effect. Portamenti can extend well beyond an octave or occur over a single half step. Major works calling for this technique in the altissimo register include both *Lilith* and *Concert Suite* by William

Bolcom, *Symphonic Rhapsody* by John Anthony Lennon, and *Memories of Xiaoxiang* by Lei Liang. There appears to be no consistent notation employed by composers to denote the saxophone portamento, and for pedagogical purposes I will assume the use of portamento even when the original markings are open to interpretation.

*Altissimo Etude No. 6* preserves pitch material from passages in the above works, but on the whole the etude is quite freely constructed. Because the various portamenti traverse the same range many times over, it was less necessary to include as many literal quotations of previously existing material. Excessive portamenti can carry a somewhat silly connotation that I fully embraced in creating this short “vaudeville rondo.” The etude opens with a six-bar introduction that features slow portamenti beginning on high F, an excellent note on which to practice wide pitch bends. This opening passage extends only once into the altissimo register in m. 4 and warms the player up by presenting slow portamenti ranging from a half-step to an entire octave.

In m. 7 the tempo increases and a bright vaudeville tone becomes prevalent in the etude’s A section. Measure 9 includes a brief slide drawn from the fourth movement of *Concert Suite* (mm. 14-15) by William Bolcom, and m. 10 quotes the opening glissando of *Lilith*’s fourth movement. The player must execute accurate portamenti at a brisk tempo and approach the slides following leaps over the break. The following two measures include similar material, this time with the additional challenge of a portamento crossing the break. The second half of the phrase in mm. 11-15 introduces portamenti with increasing frequency, speed, and interval width.

The rondo’s B section begins in m. 16, and the player must take care to play mm. 16-18 without any unintentional pitch bends. A string of ascending major seventh intervals follows, the first of which (B $\flat$  to A) is derived from the third movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody* (mm. 152-153). The portamenti again increase in speed

and change direction, quoting briefly in mm. 22-23 from the second movement of the Bolcom *Concert Suite* (m. 43) before the section concludes on altissimo F.

The musical score consists of three staves. The first staff is labeled 'Grave' and 'Vaudevillian Vivo'. It begins with a melodic line in 4/4 time, marked *mp*. The melody features various intervals and dynamics, including *mf* and *mp*. The second staff continues the melody, marked *port.* (portamento). The third staff starts at measure 15, marked *p*, and includes a '8va' (octave up) marking.

Musical Example 16: *Altissimo Etude No. 6*, mm. 1-22

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The rondo's A section returns transposed down a major third in mm. 24-31, followed by the C section in mm. 32-41. Measures 32-35 recall the introduction with register changes that render the passage more difficult. Beginning in m. 36, a wedge shape begins expanding from altissimo A up to B $\flat$ , a reference to the second movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody* (m. 37). As the intervals expand they also increase in tempo, and the performer must strive for accurate intonation as he or she executes slow portamenti over small intervals and fast portamenti over wide intervals. The A material then returns at its original pitch level and brings the etude to a close.



**Musical Example 17: *Altissimo Etude No. 6*, mm. 23-49**

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**ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 7: TRILLS AND GRACE NOTES**

Quickly moving passages in the altissimo register are often difficult to execute, a challenge that is amplified during trills and rapid grace notes, which often require creative fingerings that facilitate rapid and repeated movement between the notes involved. Several works that include such passages include concertos by Karel Husa and



Lars-Erik Larsson, *Sonata* by Mark Kilstofte, *Holy Roller* by Libby Larsen, *Symphonic Rhapsody* by John Anthony Lennon, and *Wings* by Joan Tower.<sup>44</sup>

*Altissimo Etude No. 7* opens with three trills appearing in *Wings* by Tower (page seven, system three) followed by a G-to-A trill from *Holy Roller* by Larsen (mm. 136-137). Measures 5-6 include additional trill intervals not appearing in the opening bars. A shift from long to short trills occurs in m. 7, initiating a series of half-step trills that outline several diminished chords. Measures 13-18 present rising diminished chords in quarter notes with whole step trill intervals. Taken together, the first 18 bars include every whole and half step trill interval between high B and altissimo D#. Measures 19-21 present a series of quarter notes interspersed with written-out grace note turns meant to evoke a Romantic melodic language. The mood is interrupted in m. 21 by a G-to-A $\flat$  trill drawn from the second movement of the Husa *Concerto* (nine measures after Rehearsal #16).

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<sup>44</sup> Joan Tower, *Wings* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1991).

**Allegretto**

*All trills alternate with the next note in the key signature unless otherwise indicated*

**Musical Example 18: *Altissimo Etude No. 7*, mm. 1-21**

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The remainder of the etude alludes to the leaping grace notes found in the cadenza from the third movement of the Lennon *Symphonic Rhapsody* (page 10, system five). The original passage can be found by combining the first three beats of m. 28 with the last three of m. 30. Beginning in m. 22, the grace note leaps span a number of perfect octaves and gradually grow closer until a half step is reached at the end of m. 25. Measures 26-27 return briefly to trills and present a rhythmically diminished version of

material from the first movement of the Larsson *Concerto* (mm. 153-156), referencing the previous section through four added grace notes. This whole note trill returns at different pitch levels in m. 29 and m. 32, the latter of which also occurs in the first movement of the Kilstofte *Sonata* (m. 28).

Musical Example 19: *Altissimo Etude No. 7*, mm. 22-33

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### ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 8: ARTICULATED PASSAGES CROSSING THE BREAK

While articulated intervals over the break often give the saxophonist a brief amount of additional time to move the fingers and change the throat setting before producing the desired note, the jumps also create problems in terms of achieving clean articulation and accurate intonation from the beginning of the attack. *Altissimo Etude No.*

8 draws on such passages from sonatas by David Diamond and Mark Kilstofte, *Lilith* by William Bolcom, *Concerto* by Karel Husa, *Holy Roller* by Libby Larsen, and *Distances Within Me* by John Anthony Lennon.<sup>45</sup>

The etude begins with a four-note quote from the fifth movement of *Lilith* (m. 54), which is rhythmically rescored as triplets and chained together in a series of four repetitions with a brief ascending figure tagged on the end. The first measure is repeated at different pitch levels in mm. 2-3 and concludes with similar material in m. 4 that alters the rhythm and note order of a excerpt from *Holy Roller* by Larsen (m. 119-120). These choppy sixteenth note figures are answered in m. 5-6 by rhythmically transformed leaps derived from the third movement of the Kilstofte *Sonata* (mm. 62-63). The next measure presents a melodically simplified dovetailing of two passages in the first movement of the Diamond *Sonata* (m. 114 and m. 119), emphasizing the tongued intervals across the break. During the decrescendo in mm. 8-9, another brief figure from *Holy Roller* (m. 16) precedes a brief sixteenth- and thirty-second-note passage originating in the third movement of the Husa *Concerto* (11 measures before Rehearsal #26). This motive repeats several times and is transposed in a downward sequence that leads to a cadence in m. 11.

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<sup>45</sup> John Anthony Lennon, *Distances Within Me* (Medfield, Mass.: Dorn Publications, 1981).

**Vivace**

The musical score is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Vivace'. The score consists of four lines of music, each containing measures 1 through 12. The first line (measures 1-3) starts with a forte (f) dynamic and features a series of triplets. The second line (measures 4-6) continues the triplet pattern and includes a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The third line (measures 7-9) features a piano (pp) dynamic and includes trills (tr). The fourth line (measures 10-12) starts with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and ends with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The score is characterized by a high density of notes, primarily triplets, and includes various articulations such as accents and trills.

**Musical Example 20: *Altissimo Etude No. 8*, mm. 1-12**

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The E# pickup to m. 12 initiates another borrowing from *Holy Roller* by Larsen (mm. 23-24), melodically simplified by removing the sextuplets and emphasizing the tongued notes. This passage is linked by a D in m. 13 to a rhythmically altered figure from the fifth movement of *Lilith* (m. 52). The figure is transposed and joined in m. 14 to three beats from the first movement of the Diamond *Sonata* (mm. 46-47), after which the combined figure is repeated with the *Lilith* material transposed up a major second and the

Diamond *Sonata* excerpt taken down a major second. This leads to a condensed and rhythmically simplified version in mm. 15-16 of figures from *Distances Within Me* by Lennon (m. 7 and mm. 21-22). The challenge is enhanced with added leaps and followed two beats prior to m. 17 by rhythmically altered cadenza figures from the first movement of *Lilith* (page one, staves one and two). One beat before m. 19 the cadenza material is transposed up a minor third (with minor alterations) before descending in a sequence of diminished chords that conclude on a two-octave leap from low G to altissimo G.

The musical score for *Altissimo Etude No. 8* (measures 13-23) is presented on a single staff in treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes the following details:

- Measure 13:** Starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, A, C#), followed by another triplet (B, D, F#). Dynamics range from *f* to *mf*.
- Measure 16:** Features a series of slurred eighth notes, with a dynamic of *f* transitioning to *mp* by the end of the measure.
- Measure 19:** Continues the slurred eighth-note pattern, marked with a dynamic of *ff*. A dashed line above the staff indicates a slur spanning measures 19 to 21.
- Measure 21:** The final measure of the excerpt, showing a transition from *pp* to *ff* dynamics.

**Musical Example 21: *Altissimo Etude No. 8*, mm. 13-23**

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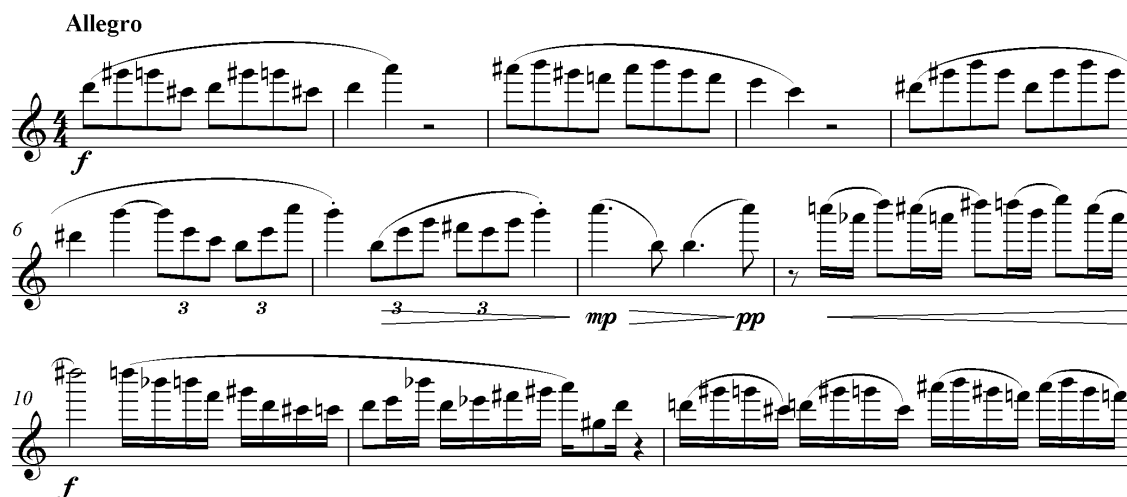
**ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 9: SLURRED PASSAGES CROSSING THE BREAK I**

Examples abound in the saxophone repertoire of slurred passages crossing the altissimo break by intervals greater than a second, so much so that I have created two etudes centered on this particular challenge. *Altissimo Etude No. 9* uses material derived from sonatas by William Albright, David Diamond, Mark Kilstofte, and David Maslanka;

concertos by Henry Brant and Lars-Erik Larsson; *Lilith* by William Bolcom; *Holy Roller* by Libby Larsen; and *Distances Within Me* by John Anthony Lennon.

The etude begins by extracting three beats of sixteenth-note material from the third movement of the Albright *Sonata* (two and three measures after Rehearsal H). The quotation is rhythmically augmented and split into three repeating segments occurring in m. 1, m. 3, and m. 5. This introductory material blends in m. 6 with a passage drawn from the first movement of the Larsson *Concerto* (m. 115 and mm. 118-119). This elides in m. 8 with a minor ninth leap from the second movement of *Lilith* by Bolcom (m. 37), which is stated in retrograde and then its original form with a decrescendo to pianissimo. Measure 9 begins with a brief quote from *Holy Roller* by Larsen (m. 226). The three-note figure that begins the original passage is employed several times in rising sequence to create extra technical challenges, and the palm D that ends the quote elides in m. 11 with another brief passage from *Holy Roller* (m. 220).





Musical Example 22: *Altissimo Etude No. 9*, mm. 1-12

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Measure 12 ushers in a section based on the previously quoted material from the Albright *Sonata*, now employed at its originally sixteenth-note level with non-altissimo note groups removed and extra repetitions added. These sixteenth notes blend into a similar passage from *Holy Roller* (mm. 61-62) beginning on the last beat of m. 13. This material is rhythmically augmented and then stated in retrograde, followed by another rhythmically augmented passage beginning on the third beat of m. 14 drawn from the third movement of *Lilith* by Bolcom (page five, system one).

The mood changes as a rhythmically simplified and abbreviated quotation from the third movement of the Kilstofte *Sonata* (mm. 51-54) begins two beats before m. 16. This quiet material dovetails into a brief passage drawn from the first movement of the Diamond *Sonata* (m. 16 and m. 26), which itself elides with a jaunty figure from the first

movement of the Brant *Concerto* (Rehearsal #25) on the second beat of m. 18. Segments of this material are repeated in order to emphasize the difficult leap from altissimo A down a minor ninth to G#. An amalgam of material from the Diamond *Sonata* follows in mm. 19-21, as figures from the first movement (m. 118-119) are linked to passages from the third movement (m. 64 and m. 113).



Musical Example 23: *Altissimo Etude No. 9*, mm. 13-23

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After the fortissimo climax on altissimo D# at the end of m. 21, the dynamic drops to piano as the angular figure from the Kilstofte *Sonata* (mm. 51-54) returns a major second lower, again truncated and rhythmically simplified. The pickup to m. 24 emphasizes another difficult minor ninth leap from A# to altissimo B, heralding material

in mm. 24-26 drawn from *Distances Within Me* by Lennon (mm. 31-32 and mm. 148-149). The quoted intervals are combined with slightly altered articulations designed to emphasize slurs over the altissimo break. After the passage is repeated, similar pitch material from the second movement of the Maslanka *Sonata* (m. 53-56) appears in mm. 27-28. The quoted passage is reduced to its basic pitch material and is transposed several times in upward sequence, followed by a rhythmic augmentation that prepares the etude's conclusion on a three-octave leap from altissimo D to low D.

**Musical Example 24: *Altissimo Etude No. 10*, mm. 24-30**

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**ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 10: SLURRED PASSAGES CROSSING THE BREAK II**

My second etude based on slurred passages over the altissimo break draws solely on material derived from *Symphonic Rhapsody* by John Anthony Lennon. This important work for saxophone soloist and orchestra presents extreme challenges with a multiplicity

of rapid slurred passages that both ascend and descend over the altissimo break. *Altissimo Etude No. 10* employs many loose borrowings from Lennon's work, and in general it is more freely composed than my other etudes. Most of the altissimo passages referenced can be reduced to augmented triads, octaves, major sevenths, perfect fifths, and perfect fourths slurred over the break. The etude begins with a focus on triads crossing the altissimo break and gradually expands to wider intervals.

The etude opens with an ascending melody that wavers between C major and C augmented and ends with a downward major seventh slur, preparing a similar figure in the next two measures that outlines an A major seventh chord. These measures introduce material from the first movement of the *Symphonic Rhapsody* (m. 42), which appears in a more literal form in m. 5. Measures 8-11 return to material derived from the etude's opening measures, after which mm. 12-15 challenge the performer with a large number of consecutive octaves slurs over the break. These measures are based on a brief passage from the first movement of *Symphonic Rhapsody* (m. 167) with the grace notes stripped away. The more expansive material in mm. 16-19 varies and rhythmically augments a four-note figure found in *Rhapsody*'s first movement (m. 183-184).

**Moderato**

The musical score for 'Moderato' (measures 1-19) is presented in a single system with four staves. The first staff (measures 1-5) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs and triplets, reaching a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second staff (measures 6-10) continues the melodic development with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes triplets and a piano (*pp*) section. The third staff (measures 11-14) shows a crescendo to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fourth staff (measures 15-19) concludes with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and features triplets and slurs. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

**Musical Example 25: *Altissimo Etude No. 10*, mm. 1-19**

John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody*, copyright © 1984 by C.F. Peters Corporation, used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

Measures 20-27 echo earlier leaping material with grace notes reinserted, followed by a rough retrograde in mm. 28-29 of pitches from the first movement (mm. 167-168), followed by the quote's original pitch order in mm. 30-31. Measures 32-33 briefly return to the etude's opening melody, after which a series of augmented arpeggios gradually accelerate to a climactic altissimo C in a reference to the first movement's cadenza (pickups to Rehearsal N). A lengthy and exaggerated diminuendo challenges the performer's endurance and intonation and is followed by a series of leaping pianissimo triplets referencing the *Rhapsody*'s first movement (m. 39 and the cadenza). Making a diminuendo to pianississimo while ascending to altissimo C presents a final challenge as the etude comes to a close.

20 *f*

23 *mp* 3 3 3 3

28

32 *mp* 3 3 3

36 3 *fff* *pp* 6

40 6 *ppp*

Musical Example 26: *Altissimo Etude No. 10*, mm. 20-42

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### ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 11: LYRICAL EXCERPTS I

The *Concertino da Camera* by Jacques Ibert contains well-known altissimo passages from the saxophone's concert repertoire. *Altissimo Etude No. 11* targets the altissimo line in the second movement (*Larghetto*) of the Ibert *Concertino* along with another lyrical line from the fifth movement of *Lilith* by William Bolcom.

The etude opens with a slow melody in F# minor, borrowing its tempo and style from the Ibert *Larghetto*. Beginning on middle C#, it gradually climbs into the palm keys and then the altissimo register. The pickup to m. 7 introduces a rhythmically augmented

quote from Ibert (m. 25). In m. 11 a second phrase answers at a fourth higher, the altissimo portion of which in mm. 17-20 incorporates further material from Ibert (mm. 26-28).

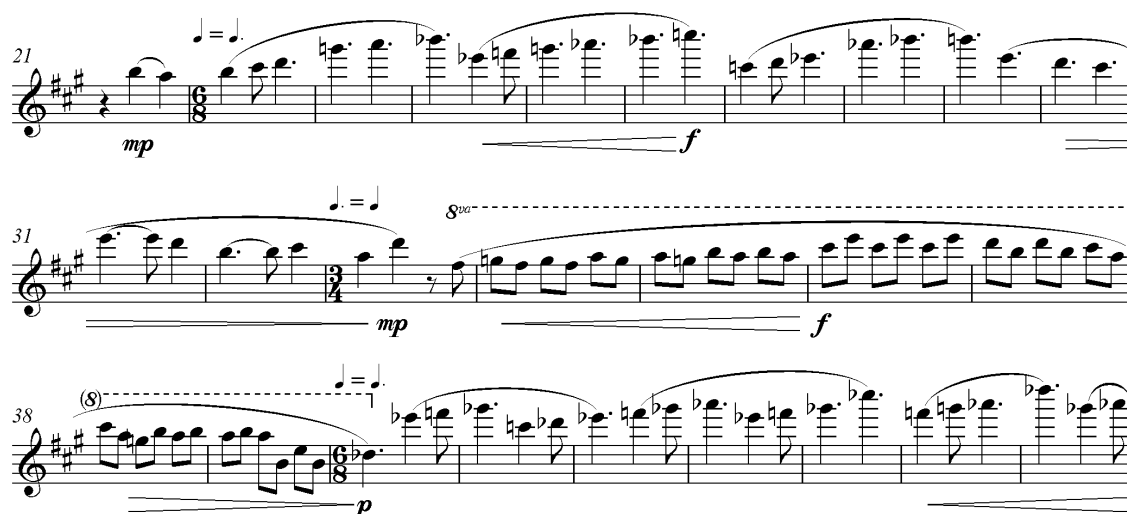
**Larghetto**

The musical notation consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 3/4 time signature. It contains measures 1 through 10. The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) at the beginning, *mp* (mezzo-piano) in the middle, and *p* at the end. The second staff begins at measure 11 and continues to measure 20. The dynamics are marked as *mp* and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The notation is dense with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes, and includes various slurs and ties.

Musical Example 27: *Altissimo Etude No. 11*, mm. 1-20

Jacques Ibert, *Concertino da Camera*, copyright © 1935 by Alphonse Leduc & Cie, publisher for the world, Paris, France.

A brief transition leads to a 6/8 section that introduces material in mm. 22-23 from the fifth movement of *Lilith* by Bolcom (m. 11). Two motivic variations follow (the second of which occurs in mm. 67-68 of *Lilith*) before the phrase ends in mm. 31-32 with another melodic reference to Ibert. The pickup to m. 34 presents a reworking of Ibert's lyrical melody (mm. 25-28), this time with added eighth notes in each beat that force the performer to execute various leaps with increased rapidity.



Musical Example 28: *Altissimo Etude No. 11*, mm. 21-46

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The combination of melodic excerpts from both Bolcom and Ibert continues with the time change in m. 40. Motives from Bolcom (mm. 61-64) are broken up before eliding in m. 51 with four beats of melody from Ibert (mm. 27-28), followed by a brief reference in mm. 52-54 to a motive from the first movement of *Lilith* (m. 20), and closing with yet another brief nod to the contour of Ibert's melody. In m. 56 the etude returns to its opening material, but this time the altissimo section quotes the fifth movement of *Lilith* (material from m. 12 merges with motives from m. 63 and then m. 22). The etude concludes with freely composed material in F# minor that emphasizes large leaps between two melodic voices at extremely delicate dynamics.



Musical Example 29: *Altissimo Etude No. 11*, mm. 47-72

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## ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 12: LYRICAL EXCERPTS II

My next lyrical etude draws on passages from the second movement (*Passacaglia*) of the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* by Ingolf Dahl and briefly from the second movement of the *Sonata* by William Albright. Both of these works include slow melodic lines that ascend into the upper portion of the altissimo register and challenge the performer's endurance and control of vibrato, intonation, and dynamics.

The etude's opening melody augments the first two measures of the *Passacaglia*'s climactic melody at Rehearsal I, embracing its D $\flat$  major scalar implications in an upward sequence that culminates on altissimo A $\flat$ . After working its way back down, the melodic line leaps from high D $\flat$  to altissimo D $\flat$ , a prominent interval found two measures after Rehearsal I. Several more octave leaps further tax the saxophonist's control and

intonation. Measures 11-15 introduce another figure whose upper notes ascend a step higher with each repetition, leading to a fortissimo minor ninth leap from high B $\flat$  to altissimo C $\flat$ . Measures 15-19 include an embellished version of the passage occurring four measures after Rehearsal I to Rehearsal J. The rapid movement creates extra challenges while the added repetitions of certain intervals afford additional practice of the leaps involved. Measures 19-20 provide a pianissimo echo of the phrase's conclusion, taxing the saxophonist's control to an even greater degree.

Adagio

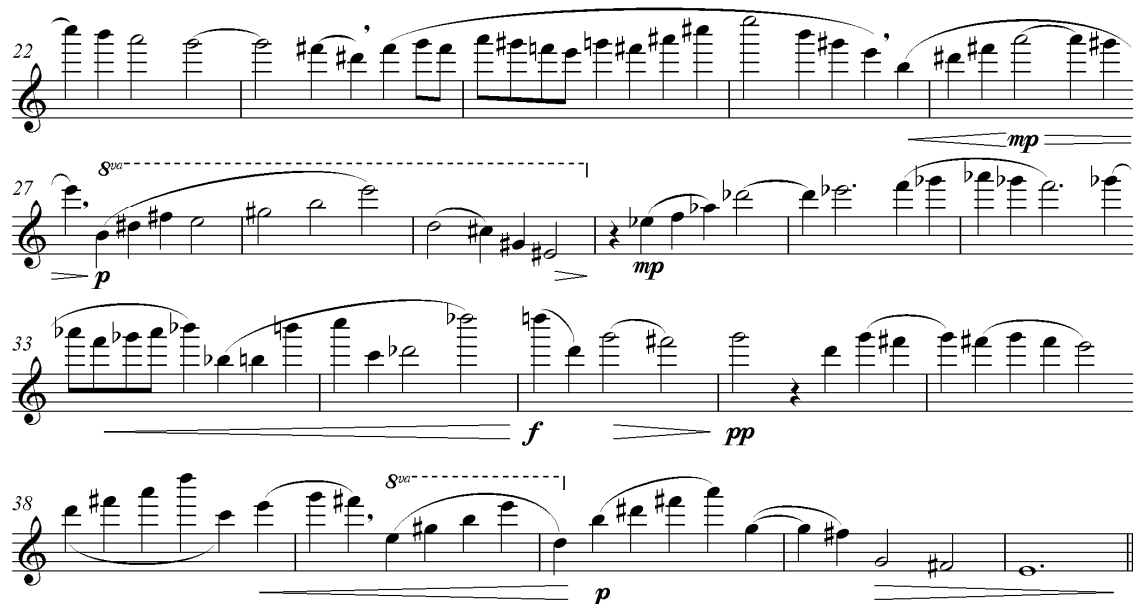
The musical score consists of five staves of music. The first staff (measures 1-6) starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and builds to a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The second staff (measures 7-11) begins with fortissimo (*ff*) and ends with mezzo-forte (*mf*). The third staff (measures 12-15) is marked fortissimo (*ff*). The fourth staff (measures 16-18) starts with mezzo-forte (*mf*) and ends with mezzo-piano (*mp*). The fifth staff (measures 19-21) begins with fortissimo (*ff*), followed by pianissimo (*pp*), then mezzo-piano (*mp*), and finally piano (*p*). A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in measure 18.

Musical Example 30: *Altissimo Etude No. 12*, mm. 1-21

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The second beat of m. 20 marks the first quote from the second movement of the Albright *Sonata* (five and six measures after Rehearsal H). The notes are enharmonically respelled for the sake of melodic cohesion and the rhythm is also somewhat simplified. The fifth beat of m. 22 returns to material from the Dahl *Concerto* (eight measures after Rehearsal J), adding repetitions of the G-F# slur across the altissimo break. The pickup to m. 26 introduces another Dahl quote (four before Rehearsal K) that is similar in style, again with some added melodic repetition.

Measure 30 returns to the etude's opening material, this time with an increased focus on consecutive altissimo intervals uninterrupted by notes in the lower registers. Measure 35 returns to material from the Dahl *Concerto* (eight measures after Rehearsal K), followed in m. 38 by a transposed and rhythmically diminished version of two and three measures after Rehearsal F. A brief transitional figure emphasizing the G-F# slur over the break leads to rhythmically diminished quotations of two and three measures after Rehearsal F and four and three measures before Rehearsal K, followed by a long descent through the registers to the etude's pianissimo conclusion. Throughout the final section, the soft dynamics of the altissimo melodies are preserved, challenging the saxophonist to slur up to altissimo D and altissimo E at piano and pianissimo.



Musical Example 31: *Altissimo Etude No. 12*, mm. 22-42

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### ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 13: THE UPPER ALTISSIMO REGISTER

The fingering chart in *Top-Tones for Saxophone* by Sigurd Raschèr extends to double altissimo C, and while there are relatively few saxophone pieces calling for notes including or above altissimo F, they do occur in works including the concertos by Henry Brant, Ingolf Dahl, Erland von Koch, and Lars-Erik Larsson; *Austintasia* by Kyle Kindred; *Ballade* by Frank Martin; and in the cadenza to an earlier edition of the *Concertino da Camera* by Jacques Ibert.<sup>46</sup> Notes in the upper altissimo register require varying degrees of embouchure adjustment for many performers, which adds to the challenge of traversing passages that extend into the saxophone's highest range.

<sup>46</sup> Kyle Kindred, *Austintasia* (Austin, Tex.: Manuscript, 2004); Erland von Koch, *Saxophon Concerto* (Hamburg: Peer Musikverlag, 1965); Frank Martin, *Ballade* (Zürich: Universal Edition, 1981).

*Altissimo Etude No. 13* includes many instances of altissimo F and several occurrences of double altissimo G and A $\flat$ . The occasional instances of double altissimo A, B $\flat$ , B and C occurring in m. 29, m. 34, and mm. 67-68 in this etude are marked as optional in recognition that these pitches may not be comfortable even for skilled altissimo performers.

The etude opens with half notes that outline an upward progression of fifths and octaves on E and B in the manner of a tuning exercise. In m. 5 the half notes are reduced to quarter notes with downward intervals added in order to intensify the intonation demands. These “tuning exercise” motives recur several times during the etude, serving as waypoints that give the performer a chance to rest between the most fatiguing sections.

Halfway through m. 7, a six-note motive derived from the first movement of the Ibert *Concertino* (beginning five measures after Rehearsal #10) leads the player to altissimo F before an eighth note “wedge” outlines a diminished chord, with leaps ranging from almost three octaves to an augmented fourth. An abbreviated quote in mm. 10-13 from the Martin *Ballade* (beginning one measure before Rehearsal #49) presents longer note values on altissimo C, E $\flat$ , and F. A separate three-note quotation of altissimo C $\sharp$ , G $\sharp$ , and E $\sharp$  from the third movement of *Austintasia* by Kindred (mm. 298-301) leads to a sequence in which the top note descends by a half step with each repetition. In mm. 17-19 the sequence elides with a D-C $\sharp$ -F figure that introduces another quote from the Martin *Ballade* (three measures after Rehearsal #6). A literal quotation of Martin’s descending chromatic line leads to an elaborated chromatic descent with thirty-second notes outlining a downward progression of octaves and fifths on F and C, alluding to the “tuning exercise” that opens the etude.



Musical Example 32: *Altissimo Etude No. 13*, mm. 1-27

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In mm. 23-25 the F-C progression climbs back up via half notes in a more literal repetition of the earlier tuning waypoint before eliding with a rhythmically altered quotation from the Martin *Ballade* (four measures after Rehearsal #53). In mm. 29-30 a quotation from the cadenza of the Ibert *Concertino* (prior to Rehearsal #41) descends in retrograde. The current edition of the *Concertino* shows the saxophone ascending to altissimo F, while an earlier published version of the passage extended to double altissimo A $\flat$ , and some recorded examples continue the ascent up the diminished scale to double altissimo B and C.<sup>47</sup> I have indicated that the B and C are optional, but preserved the altissimo A $\flat$  and G.

<sup>47</sup> John Harle, *Saxophone Concertos* (Ayes, Middlesex, England: EMI Classics, 1991); John-Edward Kelly, *Saxophone Concertos* (Germany: Arte Nova, 1995).

Following the Ibert quotation, repeated sixteenth notes lead to an elaborated quotation in mm. 30-32 from the Dahl *Concerto*'s cadenza (page 12, stave nine), followed by the earlier Ibert excerpt ascending in its original form. A four-note motive from the first movement of the von Koch *Concerto* (page five, stave five) occurs in mm. 34-35 and descends in sequence to the section's conclusion in m. 40.

Musical Example 33: *Altissimo Etude No. 13*, mm. 28-46

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Another tuning waypoint on F# and C# climbs to a condensed version in mm. 43-46 of a melody from the first movement of the Larsson *Concerto* (mm. 125-128), elaborated with extra quarter notes and eliding with rhythmically diminished references in mm. 46-50 to other sections of the first movement (mm. 270-273 and mm. 146-153).

A final tuning waypoint on G and D leads to material drawn from the third movement of the Brant *Concerto* (Rehearsal #14 to the cadenza), beginning on the third

beat of m. 53 and extending to the downbeat of m. 57. This quotation is both truncated to emphasize the high altissimo material and elaborated with additional eighth notes to increase the difficulty level. The altissimo F in m. 57 elides with a quotation from the final three measures of the Brant *Concerto*'s first movement. The last notes are lengthened to give the performer a chance to absorb the respective throat and jaw pressure settings (the double altissimo A and B $\flat$  may be performed one octave lower if desired). The etude ends with a four-octave downward leap to the alto saxophone's lowest note.

**Musical Example 34: *Altissimo Etude No. 13*, mm. 47-60**

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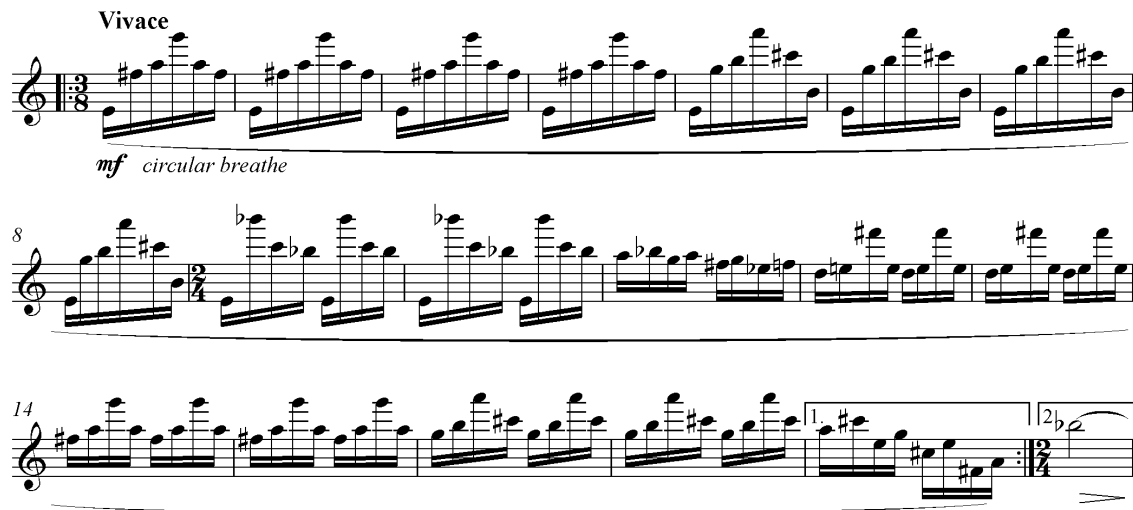
**ALTISSIMO ETUDE NO. 14: ALTISSIMO AND ADVANCED TECHNIQUES**

Though one could easily argue for the necessity of high tone playing in modern saxophone performance, I believe it still accurate to describe altissimo as an advanced technique. Other such techniques include multiphonics, circular breathing, slap tonguing, and growling. Like altissimo, most of these techniques are commonly executed by relatively accomplished performers. However, the combination of multiple advanced



techniques or the rapid switch from one technique to the next can present additional difficulties. *Altissimo Etude No. 14* includes many of the previously mentioned techniques, drawing on passages from sonatas by William Albright and Mark Kilstofte, *Lilith* by William Bolcom, and *Jungle* by Christian Lauba.<sup>48</sup>

The opening 18 measures incorporate circular breathing and are based on four-, five-, and six-note snippets from stave 32 of *Jungle* by Lauba. Each note group repeats four times with occasional pitches added or subtracted for rhythmic regularity. Transitional passages in m. 11 and m. 18 give the performer a chance to circular breathe during comfortable middle register material. The entire opening section repeats in order to further tax the saxophonist's circular breathing capabilities.



Musical Example 35: *Altissimo Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-19

Christian Lauba, "Jungle" from *Neuf études pour saxophones en 4 cahiers*, copyright © 1996 by Alphonse Leduc & Cie, owner and publisher for the world, Paris, France.

In m. 20, a four-beat quotation from the second movement of *Lilith* by Bolcom (mm. 25-26) introduces growled material that rises to altissimo C# combined with a

<sup>48</sup> Christian Lauba, "Jungle" from *Neuf études pour saxophones en 4 cahiers* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1996).

throat glissando. The excerpt is transposed up a step and descends in retrograde, followed by a longer section of growled throat glissandos in mm. 23-29 that include intervals from the fourth movement of *Lilith* (mm. 1-4).

The slap tongues in m. 30 and the ensuing material is based on a passage from the second movement of the Kilstofte *Sonata* (mm. 67-74). The section features rapid alternation between brief altissimo figures and slap tongued notes similar to those in Kilstofte's work, which appears highly condensed with pitch variation added for extra challenge.

Musical Example 36: *Altissimo Etude No. 14*, mm. 20-45

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In m. 44, the alternation of altissimo figures and slap tongue continues, though the source of the altissimo material shifts to a fragmented version of a passage from the fourth movement of the Albright *Sonata*, a collection of pitches that occurs many times between Rehearsal B and C and prior to Rehearsal N with slightly varied rhythms and pitch order. After converting the thirty-second notes into sixteenths, I condensed the

material into a single arpeggiated figure that cascades up and down until the end of the etude, varied through the occasional repetition of note pairs such as G-B $\flat$  or Eb-G. A repeat from m. 55 to m. 50 creates another opportunity for the performer to practice circular breathing before the etude culminates on a thirty-second note arpeggio up to altissimo Eb.

46

52

55

circular breathe

*ff*

Musical Example 37: *Altissimo Etude No. 14*, mm. 46-58

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## **Conclusion**

It is difficult to say whether Adolphe Sax could have imagined the degree to which the saxophone's altissimo register has been employed since the instrument's invention. Performers and composers alike have embraced its possibilities, and in light of the many works surveyed in this treatise, it seems clear that fluency in the altissimo register is mandatory for serious students of the saxophone.

The books, articles, methods, dissertations, and other materials listed in Chapter One are by no means an exhaustive compilation of the resources available to those interested in the altissimo register, and it seems likely that more will be produced. Despite the wide availability of many beginning and intermediate altissimo methods, there is a decided lack of pedagogical material targeted towards the advanced saxophonist. I hope that my collection of altissimo etudes, which were discussed at length in Chapter Two and are included in the Appendix, will provide a valuable resource for the advanced saxophonist wishing to hone his or her capabilities in the upper register.

While composing my etudes I drew from only a small portion of the works for alto saxophone that utilize the altissimo register. Many more exist for the alto and for the other members of the saxophone family. This vast repertoire offers a fertile ground for saxophonists or composers wishing to write further altissimo studies or etudes similar to my own.

## **Appendix – Complete Etudes**

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 1

## Articulated Adjacent Notes Crossing the Break

With References to:

Ingolf Dahl, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*

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Jacques Ibert, *Concertino da Camera*

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### Articulated Adjacent Notes Crossing the Break

**Allegro**

67

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 2

## Slurred Adjacent Notes Crossing the Break

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Ingolf Dahl, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*

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David Diamond, *Sonata for Eb Alto Saxophone and Piano*

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Lars-Erik Larsson, *Konsert för Saxofon Och Stråkorkester*

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John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody*

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David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*

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# Altissimo Etude No. 2

Slurred Adjacent Notes Crossing the Break

Erik Steighner

Andantino

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The piece consists of 31 measures, with various dynamic markings and articulations.

Measures 1-5: *mp* (mezzo-piano). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes crossing the staff break.

Measures 6-9: *mf* (mezzo-forte). The melody continues with slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 10-14: *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The melody features triplets of eighth notes and slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 15-18: *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte). The melody features triplets of eighth notes and slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 19-22: *cresc.* (crescendo). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 23-25: *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 26-28: *mf* (mezzo-forte). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 29-30: *ff* (fortissimo). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 31-32: *mp* (mezzo-piano). The melody features slurred eighth and sixteenth notes, ending with a final measure.

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 3

## Rapid Tonguing on Repeated Notes

With References to:

William Albright, *Sonata*

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Alec Wilder, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble*

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# Altissimo Etude No. 3

## Rapid Tonguing on Repeated Notes

Erik Steighner

## Vivace

Musical score for "The Firebird" by Igor Stravinsky, featuring a piano solo. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of 31 measures. It includes various dynamic markings such as *f*, *pp*, *p*, and *fff*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The piano part is written on a single staff with a treble clef.

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 4

## Isolated Altissimo Notes

With References to:

William Albright, *Sonata*

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Henry Brant, *Concerto for alto saxophone solo or trumpet solo, with nine instruments*

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Paul Creston, *Sonata*

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Pierre Max Dubois, *Concerto pour Saxophone alto et Orchestre à Cordes*

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Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto en Mi♭*

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Karel Husa, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Concert Band*

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Victor Morosco, *Blue Caprice*

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# Altissimo Etude No. 4

Isolated Altissimo Notes

Erik Steighner

Allegretto

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time, featuring isolated altissimo notes. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The score is divided into eight staves, each containing a series of notes with various dynamics and articulations.

**Staff 1:** Measures 1-4. Dynamics: *f*, *p*, *f*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 2:** Measures 5-8. Dynamics: *p*, *f*, *p*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 3:** Measures 9-12. Dynamics: *f*, *pp*, *f*, *mp*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 4:** Measures 13-16. Dynamics: *mf*, *f*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 5:** Measures 17-20. Dynamics: *mf*, *mp*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 6:** Measures 21-24. Dynamics: *mf*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 7:** Measures 25-28. Dynamics: *mf*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

**Staff 8:** Measures 29-32. Dynamics: *f*. Articulation: accents (>) on notes.

40 *mp* *p* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

47 *mp* *ppp*

53 *n.*

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The first staff (measures 40-46) features a melodic line with many beamed sixteenth notes, starting at a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic, decreasing to piano (*p*) and then pianissimo (*ppp*), with a crescendo back to *mp* and *ppp*. The second staff (measures 47-52) continues the melodic line, starting at *mp* and *ppp*, with a crescendo back to *mp* and *ppp*. The third staff (measures 53-58) features a melodic line with many beamed sixteenth notes, starting at a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic, decreasing to piano (*p*) and then pianissimo (*ppp*), with a crescendo back to *mp* and *ppp*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 5

## Chromatic Passages

With References to:

William Albright, *Sonata*

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William Bolcom, *Concert Suite for E♭ Alto Saxophone and Band*

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Libby Larsen, *Holy Roller*

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# Altissimo Etude No. 5

Chromatic Passages

Erik Steighner

Allegro

*p* *mp* *p* *mp*

*mf* *mp* *mf*

*f* *mf* *ff*

*6* *f* *6* *6*

*6* *mf* *p*

*mp*

*6* *6* *f*

*p*



Musical score for a piano piece, measures 26-33. The score is written on four staves, each with a treble clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) at the beginning of measure 26. The dynamics range from *mp* to *f* (forte) and *pp* (pianissimo). The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks. A fermata is present over measure 30. A *8va* (octave up) marking is present above measure 33. The score ends with a double bar line.

26 *mp* *f*

28

30 *mp* *p*

33 *f* *pp* *8va*

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 6

## Throat Glissandi/Portamenti

With References to:

William Bolcom, *Concert Suite for Eb Alto Saxophone and Band*  
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# Altissimo Etude No. 6

Throat Glissandi/Portamenti

Erik Steighner

Grave *port.* Vaudevillian Vivo

mp mf mp f

9

15 *p*

23 *ff* *f*

30 *f* *mp* *p*

38 *f*

44

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 7

## Trills and Grace Notes

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Joan Tower, *Wings*  
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# Altissimo Etude No. 7

Trills and Grace Notes

Erik Steighner

**Allegretto**

mf f mf mp

*All trills alternate with the next note in the key signature unless otherwise indicated*

mf f mf mp

mf f ff

mf f

mp

mp

ff mp

sff fp sff

Erik Steighner

# Altissimo Etude No. 8

## Articulated Passages Crossing the Break

With References to:

William Bolcom, *Lilith*

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# Altissimo Etude No. 8

Articulated Passages Crossing the Break

Erik Steighner

Vivace

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, 4/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music, with measures numbered 1 through 21. The piece is marked 'Vivace' and features a variety of articulations and dynamics. The first staff (measures 1-2) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and contains several triplet markings. The second staff (measures 3-4) continues with triplet markings and includes a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The third staff (measures 5-6) features trills (*tr*) and a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*pp*) section. The fourth staff (measures 7-8) shows a fortissimo (*ff*) and mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fifth staff (measures 9-10) includes a forte (*f*) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The sixth staff (measures 11-12) features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The seventh staff (measures 13-14) includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The eighth staff (measures 15-16) features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The ninth staff (measures 17-18) includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The tenth staff (measures 19-20) features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The eleventh staff (measures 21-22) includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The piece concludes with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.

# Altissimo Etude No. 9

## Slurred Passages Crossing the Break I

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# Altissimo Etude No. 9

Slurred Passages Crossing the Break I

Erik Steighner

Allegro

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time. It consists of nine staves of music, each containing slurred passages, triplets, and various dynamic markings. The dynamics range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *ff* (fortissimo). The tempo is marked *Allegro*. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Staff 1: *f* (forte)

Staff 2: *mp* (mezzo-piano), *pp* (pianissimo)

Staff 3: *f* (forte)

Staff 4: *p* (piano)

Staff 5: *mf* (mezzo-forte)

Staff 6: *f* (forte), *ff* (fortissimo), *p* (piano)

Staff 7: *mp* (mezzo-piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte)

Staff 8: *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), *f* (forte)

Staff 9: *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *p* (piano), *ff* (fortissimo)

# Altissimo Etude No. 10

## Slurred Passages Crossing the Break II

With References to:

John Anthony Lennon, *Symphonic Rhapsody*  
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# Altissimo Etude No. 10

Slurred Passages Crossing the Break II

Erik Steighner

Moderato

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music, each containing a series of slurred passages. The dynamics range from *ppp* (pianissimo) to *fff* (fortissimo). The score includes various articulations, including slurs, ties, and accents. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the tempo is marked *Moderato*. The score is divided into measures by bar lines, with measure numbers 6, 11, 15, 20, 23, 28, 32, 36, and 40 indicated at the beginning of their respective staves. The final measure of the piece is marked with a double bar line.

Measure numbers: 6, 11, 15, 20, 23, 28, 32, 36, 40.

Dynamics: *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*, *fff*, *ppp*.

Articulations: slurs, ties, accents, triplets (3), sextuplets (6).

# Altissimo Etude No. 11

## Lyrical Excerpts I

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# Altissimo Etude No. 11

## Lyrical Excerpts I

Erik Steighner

Larghetto

*p* *mp* *p*

11 *mp* *mf*

21 *mp* *f*

31 *mp* *f*

38 *p* *mf* *pp*

47 *mf* *pp*

56 *p* *mf*

65 *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

# Altissimo Etude No. 12

## Lyrical Excerpts II

With References to:

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# Altissimo Etude No. 12

Lyrical Excerpts II

Erik Steighner

Adagio

*mp* *mf* *f*

*ff* *mf*

*ff*

*mf*

*ff* *pp* *mp* *p*

*mp*

*p* *mp*

*f* *pp*

*p*

# Altissimo Etude No. 13

## The Upper Altissimo Register

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# Altissimo Etude No. 13

The Upper Altissimo Register

Erik Steighner

**Allegretto**

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in the upper altissimo register. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into systems of five staves each. Measure numbers 9, 17, 21, 28, 32, 39, 47, 54, and 57 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. Dynamics include *mf*, *ff*, *mp*, *f*, and *fff*. Performance instructions include *8va* (octave up) and *3* (triplets). The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final *fff* dynamic marking.

# Altissimo Etude No. 14

## Altissimo and Advanced Techniques

With References to:

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# Altissimo Etude No. 14

Erik Steighner

Altissimo and Advanced Techniques

Vivace

*mf* circular breathe

8

14

20 *p* *sffz* *pp* *p* *sffz* *pp* *growl* *ffz* *ffz*

30 *ff* *slap tongue*

39 *pp*

46 *circular breathe*

52

55 *ff*

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Erik Vincent Steighner was born in Hood River, Ore. on June 9, 1981, the son of Mark D. and Hillary A. Steighner. In 1999 he graduated from Hood River Valley High School, where he studied saxophone with his father, a high school band director. After attending the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash., Steighner graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2003 with bachelor's degrees in music and English. While at UPS he studied saxophone with Robert Musser and Fred Winkler, voice with Thomas Goleeke, and conducting with Musser and Christophe Chagnard.

In 2003 Steighner left Tacoma to study with Harvey Pittel at The University of Texas at Austin, where he completed his Master of Music in 2005 and his Doctor of Musical Arts in 2008, both in saxophone performance. During that time, Steighner performed with ensembles including the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the San Antonio Symphony, the University of Texas Wind Ensemble, Tex Sax, and the Tipping Point Saxophone Quartet.

Steighner served as Saxophone Teaching Assistant at The University of Texas at Austin from 2005-2007 and is currently Saxophone Lecturer at Texas State University in San Marcos.

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